

On the Trail of King Taksin's *Samutphāp Traiphūm*

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ABSTRACT—Two manuscripts describing the Buddhist cosmology state that they were made on order of King Taksin in 1776. One of these is kept in Bangkok, one in Berlin. A third has been expertly declared to be a later copy. In Thailand it is believed that “their” document is genuine, while the Museum in Berlin is sure “theirs” is the original. A comparison of the two shows that the Berlin document has a better claim to originality, yet is somewhat flawed. Prince Damrong, who examined it in 1930, reported that he remembered having seen a fourth version, very similar in artistic execution, but with beautiful covers. In his opinion the Berlin document was not the one that had been presented to the king. It is possible that this fourth version, that promises to surpass all known versions in beauty and skill, still exists.

In 1871 Henry Alabaster, interpreter at the British consulate in Bangkok, wrote:

The “Traiphoom” is the standard Siamese work on Buddhist cosmogony, &c. It was compiled from presumed classical sources in A.D. 1776, by order of the Siamese King, Phya Tak.²

Alabaster is referring to a new authoritative version of the classical text that King Taksin ordered to be made in 1776. However, there are at present three distinct manuscripts, each beginning with a statement that it was made as a result of that order, and a fourth is described in a letter written by Prince Damrong in 1937 but its present whereabouts are unknown. Two of the extant manuscripts begin with

¹ I thank Jürgen Schöpf and Maarten Terwiel for critical comments on the preliminary drafts of this article and Chris Baker, Niyada Lausunthorn, and Roland Platz for helping with a thorough revision. All illustrations from the Berlin Manuscript are © bpk – Bildagentur für Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Museum of Asian Art, Berlin. All illustrations from the Thonburi Manuscript are courtesy of the Fine Arts Department, Thailand.

² Henri Alabaster, *The Wheel of the Law. Buddhism Illustrated from Siamese Sources*, London: Trübner, 1871, p. 5n.

the same preface stating that the same four named scribes and four named artists produced the work, though the variation in interpretation, orthography, and artistic style between the two manuscripts render it impossible that they were the work of the same hands.

Which of these manuscripts is “the original”? What are the others—poor copies, forgeries? In this article, I follow the trail of these four manuscripts. I begin with a short description of the genre of *Traiphūm* manuscripts, follow the story of each of the four, and end with a discussion of the possible relationship between them. This is a study of the production, reproduction, storage, travels, and trafficking of traditional Thai manuscripts.

The genre of *Samutphāp Traiphūm*

The Thai possess an ancient tradition of writing on paper that is made from the fibre of the *sā* or paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*). Long rectangular sheets of this paper are folded up to form traditional Thai concertina folding books (*samut thai*). In western literature they are sometimes called *parabaik* or *leporello*-books.³

Unlike palm-leaf manuscripts that are cut in long narrow strips and have to be incised, *leporello* books can be made so wide and so broad that they offer an ideal surface for pictorial displays. The largest books, when opened, may present the viewer with a surface of up to about seventy centimetres wide and up to sixty centimetres from top to bottom, a surface sufficiently large to paint complex scenes. The Thai have developed a rich culture of manuscript painting. Well-known are the illustrated Phra Mālai texts and numerous documents pertaining to astrology and fortune-telling.

This article is about a special genre of illustrated *samut thai*, namely the *samutphāp traiphūm* or Illustrated Manuscripts of the Three Worlds. They depict and illustrate the cosmos according to the Buddhist tradition. These picture books are highly valued; some of them are truly works of art.

The three worlds refer to the World of Sensual Desire (*kāmahūmi*), the World with a Remnant of Material Factors (*rūpabhūmi*), and the World without Material Factors (*arūpabhūmi*). In the classic Thai texts, the three worlds are described in this order, from low to high. The picture books, however, show the cosmic levels in reverse order.⁴ They begin at the most exalted level, that of nirvana, then follows

³ *Parabaik* (*pura puik*) is the Burmese term for this kind of folding book, and the word *leporello* derives from the servant Leporello in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* (Leporello's list of ladies who had been won over by his master became so long that he had to fold and refold it).

⁴ This first sequence differs dramatically from the first eight chapters of Lüthai's classic *Traibhūmikathā*. While Lüthai's book begins with the deepest hells and works gradually upwards through all thirty-one realms, *samutphāp traiphūm* picture books begin in the reverse order. Why

a group of heavens, first the highest formless heavens and later the lesser celestial abodes until it reaches the immense mythical Mount Meru, around which the stars and the planets turn. Meru is surrounded by seven circular mountain ridges, each ridge separated from the other by an immense ocean. In the furthest ocean lie four continents including one, Jambudvīpa, where humans live and where the Buddha was born (see Figure 3 on p. 11 and Figure 10 on p. 27 above). Going further down the vertical sequence, below Meru is Lord Yāma's palace, the place where the deceased are judged, followed by a number of gruesome hells and a netherworld where the *pretas* suffer. This sequence often ends with a set of illustrations on the life of Siddhattha Gotama, the most recent Buddha.

Most *samutphāp traiphūm* continue with a second cosmic map showing the chief features of the continent Jambudvīpa. From Mount Meru the map traces its way through the mythological *himavānt* forest, with fairy-tale-like creatures to the mythical lake Anodatta (usually thought of as situated in the middle of the Indian subcontinent) then follows one of the rivers flowing from the lake through a landscape dotted with the chief cities where the Buddha once preached. This fantasy map covers an immense space as well as collapsing time, so that scenes from popular Jātaka stories can appear next to an image of the historical Buddha fleeing his father's palace. On this lengthy mythical map the observer follows a river system that eventually leads towards Siam, to places known to the Thai through personal observation, indicated by a set of familiar city names. After passing the Buddha Footprint near Saraburi, and a prominently drawn Ayutthaya the river reaches the open sea. From there the artists lead the viewer along the Malay Peninsula and across to the island of Sri Lanka, dominated by a gigantic Adam's Peak before the map ends in the sea beyond with more Jātaka stories (see Figure 15 on p. 38 above).

Even then the most elaborate *samutphāp traiphūm* are not finished: on the final six or eight leaves the artists have added another map, showing roughly the coast line from China to Arabia, with Ayutthaya in central position.⁵

1. The Thonburi Manuscript

In the National Library is a manuscript known officially as *Samutphāp traiphūm samai Krung Thonburī lek thī 10*, called the "Thonburi Manuscript" in this article. Up until now, the Thai scholarly world has accepted that this manuscript is the original document created as the result of King Taksin's decree of 1776. This is stated in the facsimile publication of the manuscript in 1999 and

this is so deserves to be discussed on a separate occasion.

⁵ See Klaus Wenk, "Zu einer 'Landkarte' Sued- und Ostasiens" in: *Felicitation Volumes of Southeast-Asian Studies presented to His Highness Prince Dhaninivat Kromamun Bidyalabh Bridayakorn*, Volume 1, Bangkok: Siam Society, 1965, pp. 119-122.

repeated in subsequent publications.⁶ However, there are certain anomalies and inconsistencies in the Thonburi Manuscript that require explanation, and that I believe question its status as “the original”. I shall first describe the Thonburi Manuscript and its similarities and differences from others in the genre, and then address these anomalies and inconsistencies.

The preamble

The Thonburi Manuscript has a lengthy introductory statement reporting that on a date that can be calculated as 24 September 1776, King Taksin, after having expounded on the value of books depicting the Buddhist cosmos, ordered Chaophrayā Sīthammathirāt, one of his chief ministers,⁷ to prepare paper of good quality, to send it to scribes who have the ability write the Three Worlds and to let these scribes execute the task at the office of the Supreme Patriarch. The book is to have bright illustrations throughout and serve as ethical teaching for the future. All the paintings are to be accompanied by short explanations. The Supreme Patriarch is required to check and control the process so that the writing will be in accordance with the Pali narrative.

Beneath this account of King Taksin’s instructions are the names of four artists and four scribes who, so we are told, created the work. The artists were Luang Phetchawakam, Nai Nām, Nāi Bunsā and Nāi Rueang, and the scribes who wrote the accompanying texts were Nāi Bunchan, Nāi Chot, Nāi Son and Nāi Thongkham.

First anomaly: incomplete

In most manuscripts of this genre (including the other two extant texts described later in this article), both sides of the paper are used. However, the reverse side of the Thonburi Manuscript is completely empty. Accordingly, the number of illustrations differs dramatically. The Thonburi Manuscript has 133 pages with text and/or illustrations, while the second and third manuscripts described below have respectively: 125 illustrated pages on front and 137 on the back; and 121 pages inscribed on the front and 110 on the reverse. The Thonburi Manuscript has only the first “vertical sequence” plus scenes from the life of the Buddha, while the other two continue further in the sequence described above (see table below p. 65). The Thonburi Manuscript must thus be regarded as an incomplete *samutphāp traiphūm*.

⁶ Thus Chatri Prakitnonthakan, *The Philosophical Constructs of Wat Arun*, Bangkok: 2014, pp. 136-137 cites Rungrot Phiromanukul, “Kānsueksā choengwikhro thi mā khong samutphāp traiphūm”, Withayāniphon pratyādutsadī banthit sākāwīchāborānkhadi samai prawatsāt phāk wīchāborānkhadi banthit withayālaisinlapakon pii kansueksā, 2552 [2009].

⁷ This minister is also mentioned in *Phrarāṭchaphongsāwadān Krungthonburī chabap Phan Chanthanumāt (Choem)*, Prachum Phongsāwadān, Vol 40, Khurusaphā Ph.S. 2512 [1969], p. 17.

Second anomaly: inconsistent orthography

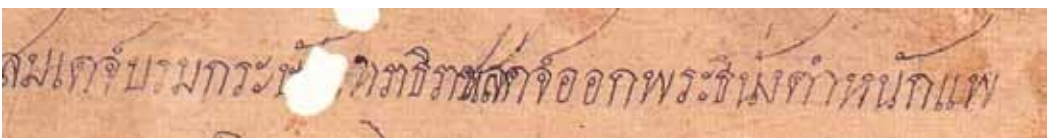
The Thonburi Manuscript is evidently inspired by older texts, such as those published as “Samutphāp Traiphūm chabap Krung Sī’ayutthayā, Lek thī 6” (hereafter: Ayutthaya 6), and “Samutphāp Traiphūm chabap Krung Sī’ayutthayā, Lek thī 8” (hereafter: Ayutthaya 8).⁸ The “vertical sequence” in particular shows strong resemblance to Ayutthaya 6. The orthography and spelling suggest that the Thonburi Manuscript dates from a period that ranges between the late 18th to the first half of the 19th century. The frequent use of the Khom alphabet for Pali words hints that it dates from early in that range.

However, the opening pages differ significantly from the remainder.

The beginning of the preamble describing King Taksin’s commissioning of the work is executed rather clumsily (see below). Unlike the rest of the text, the preamble is written without a template, so that the lines do not run straight across the page. Moreover, the scribe apparently noted that he had missed the “sara e” in the word เสดจ “sadet” and had to squeeze it in later, a mishap that can hardly be expected from scribes chosen to prepare such an important document.

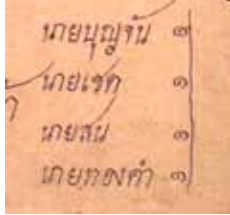


Preamble in Thonburi manuscript (left) and detail of 2nd line (below)

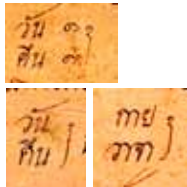


⁸ *Samutphāp Traiphūm chabap Krung Sī’ayutthayā–chabap Krung Thonburī, Lem 1, Khanakammakān fāi pramuan ekkasān lae chotmāihet nai khana amnuai kān chat ngān chaloem phrakiet phrabātsomdetphrachaoyuhua, chatphim nueang nai okāt phrarāchaphithī mahāmongkhon chaloem phrachanom phansā 6 rop, 5 thanwākhom 2542* [Illustrated manuscripts of the Three Worlds from Ayutthaya and Thonburi, Part 1, The commission to collect documents and testimonies in the commission directing the honoring of his Majesty the King on the occasion of the celebration of completing six cycles of twelve years on 5 December 1999]. There are other ancient, very beautiful *samutphāp traiphūm*, such as the famous Phaenthī Traiphūm Aksonlao and Traiphūm phāsā Khamen, both published in 2004, but apparently they did not serve as models for the makers of the Thonburi Manuscript or the Berlin Manuscript.

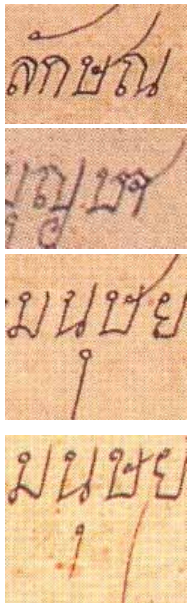
At first sight, the handwriting appears identical throughout the document, but a close look reveals several differences between the first five pages containing the preamble and the sermon on nirvana on the one hand, and the remainder of the text on the other.



In the preamble, the vertical stroke that link the list of four scribes and four painters (where in modern Thai a *wonglep pīkkā* would be used) is remarkably wobbly. Moreover the stroke lacks any flourish at the top.

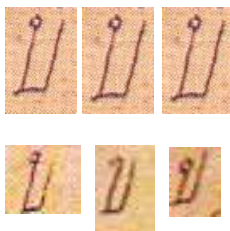


Yet on all eleven occasions where the same device is used in the rest of the document, there is a looped flourish at the top end, as in the three examples shown to the left here.



In the preamble, the character ๙ *so ruesi* is formed with the horizontal dash near the top of the riser, as in the three examples on the left.

In the remainder of the Thonburi Manuscript, the horizontal dash is near the middle of the riser. This can be clearly seen by comparison of the word มนุษย์ *manut* here from the main text with the same word from the preamble, above it.



In the preamble the vowel *sara ū* is drawn with the descender emerging from the center of the loop, as in the three upper examples to the left here.

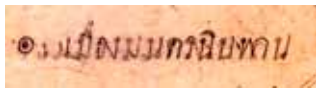
In the remainder of the manuscript, the descender emerges from the right edge of the loop, as in the three lower examples. The same is true of *sara u*. Compare the two examples of the word มนุษย์ *manut* above.

These differences suggest that the first five pages, containing the preamble and the sermon on nirvana, were written by different hands from the remainder of the text, and probably at a different time, as such orthographic conventions changed over time.

Third anomaly: text for the description of nirvana

In Ayutthaya 8 and the two extant texts described below, the sermon on nirvana ends at the bottom of the fourth page with the words *chop boribūn*, or “[it is] perfectly finished.” The following two pages contain an illustration of nirvana with an explanatory text enumerating its physical features: the number of its walls, the gates, the palace, the resting place [presumably for the Buddha], the lake with lotus flowers and bees, various birds, and more.

The Thonburi Manuscript also has the illustration of nirvana on the pages following the sermon. However, the text to accompany this illustration is displaced to the previous page. Apparently the scribe ended the sermon on nirvana halfway down the fourth page (a result of the document’s unusually large size), and made the mistake of continuing to inscribe the description that properly belonged on the following page. Perhaps flustered by this error, the scribe omitted two letters from



the second word of this overflow, ม “m” instead of มหา “mahā”, a typical copyist’s mistake (see left).

Interpretation

How can we explain these anomalies? I propose that there was an original manuscript of high quality and some antiquity that had five blank pages at the beginning before opening with the illustration of nirvana. It was common practice to leave blank pages at the beginning of such valuable manuscripts as a measure of protection against wear and tear, and attacks by insects. The first four pages of the third manuscript considered below are also blank. The Ayutthaya 6 manuscript, which may have been the inspiration for this Thonburi Manuscript, also begins with the illustration of nirvana.

Why this manuscript was incomplete is unknown. One possibility is that it was under preparation at the time King Taksin commissioned a completely new version.

I propose that the first five pages, including the preamble reporting King Taksin’s commission and the names of the craftsmen, were copied onto these blank pages at a later date. The source for this copying was the finished manuscript that the king had commissioned in 1776. The copying was done by someone who intended to imitate the style of writing in the original document but made some small errors of detail. Clearly, this was done in order to produce the appearance that the Thonburi Manuscript was the document that King Taksin had commissioned.



Nirvana in the Thonburi Manuscript (above) and Berlin Manuscript (below). Note the full text in the Berlin Manuscript but only a single overflow line in the Thonburi Manuscript.



There are signs that the person who executed this task began hesitatingly, but soon gained confidence and that he succeeded in creating a convincing semblance of the handwriting of the older part.

Since the Thonburi Manuscript is regarded by the Thai authorities as being the original, written in 1776, the substitution has been successful. To understand why this substitution was made, and where the 1776 original now resides, we must follow the trail further.

2. The Copied Manuscript

The second manuscript will not detain us long. It was acquired by the National Library in Bangkok in 1900 and given the number Thonburi 10K. The manuscript contains the full sequence of the Traiphum genre, but the execution of the illustrations is of poorer quality than the two other extant manuscripts. The preamble is limited to a single line, stopping in mid-sentence: “Phraphutthasakarāt luanglaeo dai 2319 phra’wasā set sankhayā 4 duean kap 26 wan pacuban na wan 3 +¹³ 11 kham, chunlasakkarāt 1138 pi wok atthasok, Somdet...” In translation: “Already 2319 rainy seasons and four months and 26 days of the Buddha era having elapsed, it being the third day of the week, the thirteenth day of the waxing moon in the eleventh month, Chula-era 1138, the year of the monkey, the eighth year of the decade, His Majesty....”

These are almost exactly the opening words of the other two extant versions (the only difference being that in both other extant manuscripts the day is given as the twelfth day of the waxing moon). The name of King Taksin, his command and the names of the craftsmen do not occur; instead the scribe has left an open space.

An expert committee has determined that this manuscript is a copy made around the end of the 23rd century, Buddhist Era, which roughly corresponds with the middle of the 19th century CE.⁹ Possibly it was an attempt to make a copy of the 1776 original, but replicating such a major work of art was beyond the capabilities of the artists. Why such a copy might have been made is another part of the mystery.

3. The Berlin Manuscript

In the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin is a *samutphāp traiphūm*, formerly catalogued as Handschrift IC 27507 and now as II 650. Here it is referred to as the “Berlin Manuscript.” Its existence has been known for some time. In 1965, a special volume of the *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (Register of Oriental Manuscripts in Germany) was devoted to this

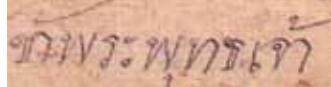
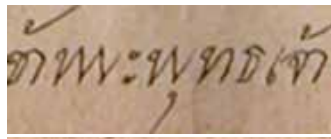
⁹ *Samutphāp Traiphūm chabap Krung Sī’ayutthayā–chabap Krung Thonburī*, Lem 2, p. 7.

one manuscript.¹⁰ Unlike the various *samutphāp traiphūm* kept in Bangkok, it has not been published, and hence has not figured in the research and debate over these manuscripts in recent years. Yet a strong claim can be made that this document, rather than the Thonburi Manuscript, is the 1776 original.

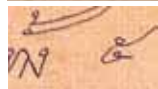
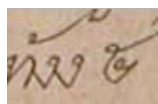
The preamble has exactly the same wording, relating King Taksin's commission and the names of the craftsmen, as that found in the Thonburi Manuscript. Unlike that work, however, the Berlin Manuscript has the full sequence of the Traiphūm genre. Moreover, the artists of the Berlin Manuscript have interpreted the various scenes in new ways that depart from the tradition followed by the Ayutthaya-era versions and the Thonburi Manuscript. Perhaps a new king in a new capital wanted to mark a break from the past with a new interpretation of this core text of the Thai Buddhist tradition.

Although both the Thonburi and Berlin Manuscripts have the same preamble naming the same eight craftsmen, the difference in handwriting and illustrations between the two documents excludes the possibility that both were made by the same team. The preamble has been copied from one to another. There are several features of the orthography that suggest that the Berlin Manuscript may be the more original work.

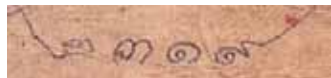
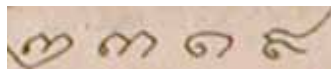
In the Berlin Manuscript Pāli words are usually written in Thai script, while in the Thonburi Manuscript they are written in Khom.



The Berlin Manuscript uses more traditional orthography. For example, *phra* is written with the consonants “ph” and “r” fused (see left, above), while the Thonburi Manuscript uses the “modern” style (see left, below).

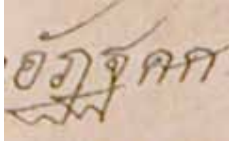


In the Berlin Manuscript; *thang* is sometimes written without *mai* (*hanākāt*) but with the final consonant duplicated (see left above), while in the preamble of the Thonburi Manuscript, *thang* is written in “modern” style (see left below).



The numerals in the Berlin Manuscript (see left above) are written in the fashion of the 18th century, while those in the preamble of the Thonburi Manuscript (see left below) take a more modern form, but written in rather spidery and insecure way.

¹⁰ Klaus Wenk, *Thailändische Miniaturmalereien, nach einer Handschrift der Indischen Kunstabteilung der Staatlichen Museen Berlin* (Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Supplementband III), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965. This book contains twenty-four illustrations showing details from the manuscript. Three years later a much abbreviated Thai version was published as a paperback, with only five of the original colour plates (Klaus Wenk, *Chitram Thai Doem*, Bangkok: Hunsuan, B.E. 2511 [1968]).

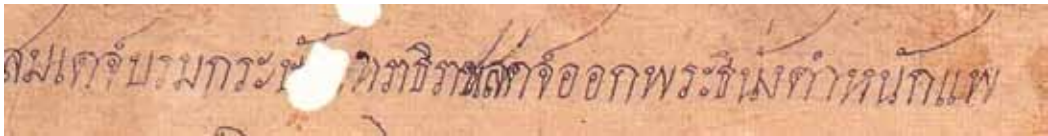
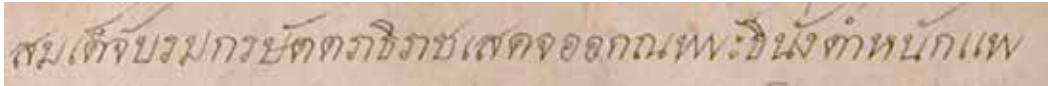


The Berlin Manuscript spells *Athasok* according to its Sanskrit roots (left, above), but the Thonburi Manuscript misspells the word (left, below).



The Berlin Manuscript has the horizontal stroke on *so ruesi* at low level (as found in 17-18th century orthography), while in the Thonburi Manuscript the stroke is drawn much higher. All these differences suggest that the Berlin Manuscript is more likely to be the original.

Most important is the opening sentence mentioning King Taksin. The scribe working in 1776 would write with great care, knowing that the king himself would probably soon inspect the document. Compare this sentence in the Berlin Manuscript (above) and Thonburi Manuscript (below):



The writing in the Berlin Manuscript is even, the scribe is confident, the spelling conforms with late 18th century practice (note the way “phra” is written and the lack of the *kalan* on “sadet”). As already noted, the same passage in the Thonburi Manuscript is executed somewhat clumsily, and even contains an obvious mistake.

If the Berlin Manuscript is indeed the original, how did such a valuable document come to reside in Berlin? The centerpiece of this story is the German adventurer, Adolf Bastian. He was director of the Berlin Museum of Ethnology when it acquired the Traiphum manuscript in 1893-4. Thirty years earlier he had been given access to manuscripts in the royal library of King Mongkut, and had described some pages from a Traiphum manuscript in the book he wrote about his travels to Siam (*Reisen in Siam im Jahre 1863*, [*Travels in Siam in 1863*]).

Adolf Bastian's activities in 1862 and 1863

When on 15 November 1862, the thirty-six year old Adolf Bastian crossed the border between Burma and Siam, he was already a man of some renown as an intrepid explorer. He was born on 26 June 1826 in Bremen, the son of a wealthy merchant. After completing his study in medicine, he set out in 1851 on a voyage to explore the world. This first journey lasted eight years and not long after, in 1860, he published three volumes on *The History of Mankind from a Psychological*

Perspective, often regarded as the first German major study in ethnology.¹¹

Immediately, he prepared for his second major journey, this time a proper scientific expedition in the countries that later would be subsumed by the term Mainland Southeast Asia. In 1861 he began this research voyage that would last more than four years, of which one full year was spent in Burma, one in Siam, and the rest in Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, Japan, and China, before returning home via Siberia. The results of this second period of research were published in six volumes as *Die Voelker des Oestlichen Asiens* [The Peoples of the Eastern Part of Asia].¹² Volume 3 deals exclusively with his time in Siam.

The six volumes are basically an account of how Bastian gained access to these various cultures and what he learnt from their literatures. Bastian had decided that he would need a year residing in a capital city, learning sufficiently of the local language to gain the cooperation of the local elite in order to delve into the historical and mythological written sources of the chosen culture.

After his year in Burma he reached Bangkok in December 1862 and found a suitable accommodation with John Hassett Chandler¹³ Immediately, he arranged for an audience with King Mongkut and met with a favourable response regarding his plans to learn more about Buddhism and to study documents in Siamese and Pali.¹⁴ If we can trust his account, in later audiences he impressed the Siamese monarch to such a degree that Mongkut decided to address him as *nak prāt* (learned man).¹⁵

As to how he gained access to important documents, we shall let him speak for himself:

Of all my acquaintances, one of the most important was that of a nobleman called Phra-Alak (royal scribe), i.e. the librarian in charge of the palace archives. He and his secretaries were installed in a room with a low ceiling that could be reached by climbing a narrow covered stairway, and I availed

¹¹ *Der Mensch in der Geschichte, zur Begründung einer Psychologischen Weltanschauung*, Band 1 Die Psychologie als Naturwissenschaft, Band 2 Psychologie und Mythologie, Band 3 Politische Psychologie, Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1860.

¹² 6 Volumes, Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1866-1871.

¹³ John Hassett Chandler arrived in Siam in 1843 as a Baptist missionary. He ran a printing press and, at the time of Bastian's visit, was no longer preaching the gospel. In 1860 he was acting American Consul, but in 1861, he learned that his appointment had not been confirmed by the Senate. He was involved in business affairs, and served as translator and broker for foreigners who wanted to do business with the Thai government. See Benjamin A. Batson, "American Diplomats in Southeast Asia in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 64, Part 2, 1976, p. 56.

¹⁴ Adolf Bastian, *Reisen in Siam im Jahre 1863* [Travels in Siam in the Year 1863], *Die Völker des oestlichen Asien. Studien und Reisen von Dr. Adolf Bastian*, Vol. 3, Jena: Hermann Costenoble, 1867, p. 70.

¹⁵ Bastian, *Reisen in Siam*, p. 116.

myself of every opportunity to visit him and chat an hour or so in the atmosphere of antiquarian dust. The book treasures were then taken from their secure repository and laid out on the ground next to us for convenient perusal... He proved obliging in every way, answered my questions as far as he could solve them himself, and with great liberality allowed me to borrow the books I wanted, in order to translate or make excerpts of them at home.¹⁶

As far as I know, Bastian is the only European who, in the mid-19th century, obtained free access to the royal manuscript collection and who was assisted in finding scribes and artists skilled in copying manuscripts.¹⁷

What manuscript did Adolf Bastian see in 1863?

In his *Reisen in Siam im Jahre 1863*, Bastian mentions examining a “book Trai-Phum [that] was created in the time of Phaya-Tak in the year Phuttha-Sakkharat 2319 in Thonburi... under supervision of the Supreme Patriarch,”¹⁸ and describes a number of its scenes. After comparing Bastian’s descriptions with the actual manuscript held in Berlin, Klaus Wenk concluded that Bastian had viewed a different manuscript in 1863 as “some of these descriptions were not found in the Berlin *samutphāp traiphūm* or they were depicted differently.”¹⁹ Unfortunately Wenk did not specify which of Bastian’s descriptions did not match with the Berlin manuscript. In order to determine this I will now present an English translation of the whole of Bastian’s report of the *samutphāp traiphūm* that he saw in 1863.²⁰ After examining Bastian’s report in detail, we may come to a decision as to what document Bastian had before him.

Scene 1

Bastian’s text: The “Way” and the “Fruit” are depicted by priests in yellow or reddish clothes, standing in pairs, first under three beams, then under two, then under one. Then the Priest of the Way carries the fruit on his head, and the Priest of the Fruit has nothing above his head, having reached the highest stage of holiness.

¹⁶ Bastian, *Reisen in Siam*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁷ At first I suspected that Bastian had caused the Copied Manuscript to be made and that either wilfully or by accident he had returned the copy to the royal library and carried the original in his luggage to Berlin. This was the topic of a lecture I presented at the Siam Society on Saturday, 25 January 2014 during which I also mentioned the possibility that, thirty years afterwards, Bastian used a donation of Siamese manuscripts in 1894 to “slip” the Berlin copy into the museum’s holdings. Since coming across Bastian’s own account of what really happened (recounted below) my suspicions have been allayed.

¹⁸ Wenk, *Thailändische Miniaturmalereien*, p. 15, citing Adolf Bastian, *Reisen in Siam*, p. 403.

¹⁹ Wenk, *Thailändische Miniaturmalereien*, p. 15.

²⁰ All of Bastian’s text below are my translations of passages found in Bastian, *Reisen in Siam*, pp. 404-5.



Scene 1, "The Way and the Fruit," in the Berlin Manuscript

Comment: This scene belongs to the standard opening sequences, depicted directly after nirvana. It is already found in the oldest surviving copies of *samutphāp traiphūm* (Ayutthaya 6 and Ayutthaya 8). The figures show the eight stages of becoming an *arahat*: entering the stream; reaping its fruit; entering single rebirth; reaping its fruit; entering no more rebirth; reaping its fruit; entering the stage of *arahat*; and reaping its fruit.



Scene 2, two of the Brahma heavens, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 2

Bastian's text: The five highest Brahma heavens are called Suthāvāt. The regions Vehapphalā and Asaññīsattā form the fourth Jhāna.

Comment: Here Bastian's informant looks at a whole section of the document, opened over four folds. These scenes can be found in all *samutphāp traiphūm*.



Scene 3, the terraces of the first Jhāna, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 3

Bastian's text: The terraces of the first Jhāna (Parittāpha and Apparamāna) will lapse and be destroyed by water.

Comment: Bastian moves directly to the following two pages, found in all *samutphāp traiphūm*.

Scene 4

Bastian's text: In the lower regions lives the four-handed Brahmana.

Comment: The only four-handed Brahmana that could be found in all *samutphāp traiphūm* is a detail from the Mahānāradakassapa Jātaka drawn in the Berlin Manuscript. The rather clumsy version of the same figure in the Copied Manuscript is depicted with six arms. This is the first indication that Bastian may be looking at the Berlin Manuscript.



Scene 4, a four-handed Brahma, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 5

Bastian's text: Children, who have fulfilled their duties towards their parents, will gain access to the heaven of Indra.

Comment: Indra's heaven (Thai: Dāowadueng), situated above the cosmic Mount Meru, appears in all documents of this genre. Bastian's text is clearly taken from a commentary written on the manuscript above the depiction of Dāowadueng. The full text says: "bukkhon phū dai khamrop yamkreg bidā māndā, phū thao phū kae nai khantī ot khwāmkrōt sia dai phū nan dai koet nai dāwaduengsawak" or: "those who honour and respect parents as well as old people and who have their anger completely eliminated, those people will be born in the Dāowadueng-heaven". This text does not occur in the older *samutphāp traiphūm*, but can be found in the Thonburi, Berlin, and Copied Manuscripts.



Scene 5, Indra's Heaven, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 6

Bastian's text: The Buddha is usually depicted by a lotus flower, one that blooms in front of a seat on the rocks.

Comment: This note refers to a scene from the life of the



Scene 6, the Buddha depicted as a lotus, in the Berlin Manuscript



Scene 7, a hare in the Chariot of the Moon, in the Berlin Manuscript

Buddha. In the tenth rainy season after reaching enlightenment, the Buddha spent a retreat in the Parileyya-forest, where he received sustenance from a monkey offering honey and an elephant offering a container of water. This scene is usually depicted with the Buddha graciously accepting these gifts. All three manuscripts (Thonburi, Berlin, and Copied) depict the Buddha in this scene using the symbol of a lotus on a rock, just as Bastian describes it.

Scene 7

Bastian's text: The Chariot of the Moon has a hare riding behind the coachman.

Comment: The Berlin Manuscript has two locations where the moon is thus depicted with a hare sitting at the back of the vehicle. The only other *samutphāp traiphūm* that depicts the moon in connection with a hare is Ayutthaya 6, but there the hare is not behind the charioteer, but drawn on the vehicle's wheel.



Scene 8, Phra Uthumphon on Krailat, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 8

Bastian's text: On the Krailāt mountain Phra Uthumphon sits between two women. Beneath the palace of Phra Narai with his two wives sit three wise men, praying, next to a conical hill, that is the representation of Phra Iswara living within.

Comment: Again, Bastian's description, linking the three wise men with a representation of a conical hill can be matched only with an illustration from the Berlin Manuscript, and not with any of the published *samutphāp traiphūm*.

Scene 9

Bastian's text: In the parks of the Himaphān you see the Sithon, who make merry with dancing and singing, as do the Khonthan.

Comment: The scenes of mythical beings dancing in the Himaphān are standard in the *samutphāp traiphūm* genre. However, while the Khonthan or Gandharva are mentioned in the Berlin Manuscript, the name Sithon could not be found in any of the versions. Probably Bastian misheard the word *withayāthon* (here written below the picture), another supernatural being resident in Himaphān.



Scene 9, *withayāthon* in Himaphān, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 10

Bastian's text: In the town of Kālanākharāt (the Black Snake King) all inhabitants are asleep.

Comment: This is depicted in the Berlin Manuscript, directly beneath the scene of the Buddha in Parileyya forest (Scene 6 above). The legend refers to an episode, just before Siddhatta Gotama becomes a Buddha. Sujātā presented him with a dish of sweet rice that he eats and then examines, looking for an omen that would indicate his destiny. If the empty bowl floats upstream in the river Nerañjara, it is a sign that he is on the verge of enlightenment. The bowl does indeed float against the current, later sinking down to the realm of Kālanākharāt. This scene is illustrated with the Black Snake King in human form, asleep in his palace, with three ordinary people asleep below him. Sujātā's bowl is shown floating down to rest on three other bowls, deposited in former times by three previous Buddhas.

This scene is found in both the Thonburi Manuscript and Berlin Manuscript, but only the Berlin document depicts the snake-king with a dark skin.



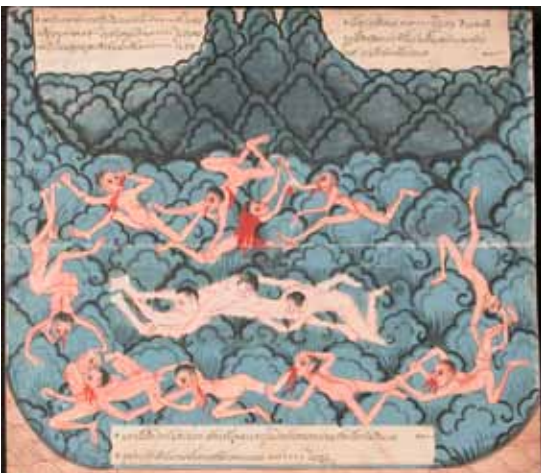
Scene 10, the Black Snake King, in the Berlin Manuscript



Scene 11, judgement of the deceased, in the Berlin Manuscript



Scene 12, the Sankhāt Hell, in the Berlin Manuscript



Scene 13, the Lokanta Hell, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 11

Bastian's text: The deceased are judged deep under Jambudvīpa in Yāmaloka.

Comment: The realm of Yāma is found in all *samutphāp traiphūm*.

Scene 12

Bastian's text: In the Sankhāt-hell you also see an elephant led to be punished, as well as Yaksas with horses heads.

Comment: The Sankhāt Hell is reserved for people who, during a previous life, killed animals. Many of them are shown with human bodies, but with the head of the animal they had killed. Both the Thonburi and Berlin Manuscripts have the scene of the elephant-headed man being dragged along, as well as figures with horses' heads.

Scene 13

Bastian's text: Heretics (*micchādītthi*) are punished outside the Chakravāla in the water of the Lokantanarok.

Comment: All available *samutphāp traiphūm* manuscripts in which the Lokanta Hell is depicted simply state its size and relate that the beings there eat each other's flesh. However, the information that heretics go there is strange, since Micchādītthi should be sent to a separate auxiliary hell, reserved for those holding wrong views.²¹ This is probably a mistake by Bastian's informants.

²¹ Micchādītthi is the sixteenth auxiliary hell. See Frank E. Reynolds and Mani B. Reynolds (tr.), *Three Worlds according to King Ruang: A Thai Buddhist Cosmology*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1982, pp. 79-80.

Scene 14

Bastian's text: In the Asuraphiphop the kings guard in pairs over the four points of the compass, and Phrommathat-Asun belongs to the Guardians of the North.

Comment: This is a standard depiction in Thai *samutphāp traiphūm*.



Scene 14, a guardian of the four points, in the Berlin Manuscript

Scene 15

Bastian's text: Where the finding of the Buddha Footprint was reported by Hunter Bun to Saraburi is added: "Here are the traces of the footprints of our Lord in manifold circles, gifted with the 105 Glories, as these are written in a Pāli text and coincide with information from Sri Lanka."

Comment: The words Bastian recorded here do not appear in any of the examined *samutphāp traiphūm*. The story of Hunter Bun finding the Buddha footprint on a mountain near the town of Saraburi was common knowledge in Siam, and is related in detail in the Royal Chronicles.²² Moreover, it is likely that the number 105 is a misreading from Bastian's original notes, as all learned people in Siam knew that the number of symbols on the footprint is 108. This is an indication that the document Bastian saw in 1863 differs from the three at hand.



Scene 15, the Buddha footprint in Saraburi, in the Berlin Manuscript

Appraisal

Although Bastian spoke Thai imperfectly and his knowledge of Indian mythology was superficial, he still managed to record many details of the scenes that were explained to him. While the first few scenes come from the opening section of a *samutphāp traiphūm*, later scenes are taken from various parts and do not follow the sequence found in the originals.

From Bastian's description of scenes 7 and 8, we can exclude the possibility that he was inspecting the Thonburi Manuscript. Moreover, his descriptions of scenes 1, 7, and 8 strongly suggest that he was viewing the Berlin Manuscript.

²² Richard D. Cushman (transl.), *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, Bangkok: Siam Society, 2000, pp. 209-210.

However, his descriptions of scenes 9, 13 and 15 do not match with the Berlin Manuscript. In the case of scenes 9 and 13, the discrepancy could have arisen from a misinterpretation by Bastian's Thai assistant, or Bastian's misunderstanding. But the discrepancy in scene 15 is harder to explain. Did Bastian in 1863 see a manuscript that was similar to the Berlin Manuscript, but not quite the same?

How did the manuscript arrive in Berlin?



Adolf Bastian

Bastian obtained his first academic teaching position in Berlin. In 1868, he obtained his Habilitation, Germany's highest academic qualification, his license to be a professor. From 1868 to 1873, he was among the founding fathers of the Berlin Museum of Ethnology, becoming the chief of the ethnographic collection. His private collection formed a major part of the first basic collection. In 1871, he became honorary professor for ethnology in Berlin and in 1873, when the first Museum of Ethnology was formally established, he became overall director of the Museum. He remained its director until his death in 1905, thus living to see the collection moved in 1886 to its own building on

what was then called the Königgratzer Strasse. In 1894, the museum acquired the Berlin Manuscript.²³

There are two museum publications that announce the acquisition of the document. The first was an article announcing the arrival of the "famous pictorial portrayal of the Buddhist cosmos".²⁴ The second is an article by Bastian himself.²⁵

Bastian recalls that in 1862 (more likely this was 1863) he was given access to the Siamese royal library, where he examined, apart from historical documents, also an illustrated work of art that dealt with Buddhist cosmology, from which he copied some paragraphs that were published in his *Reisen in Siam im Jahre 1863* (the passages we have examined in some detail above). At that time, he remembers, his request to examine the document in more detail was not granted. Still, Bastian had been impressed to such an extent that later he had repeatedly asked after its whereabouts.

For a long time his inquiries met with no success. Apparently the manuscript

²³ Between 1894 and 1963 the document was kept in the Ethnology Museum (India section), then it was transferred to the new Museum of Indian Art, which recently was merged with the Museum of East Asian Art to form the Museum of Asian Art.

²⁴ F. W. K. Müller, "Anzeige neu eingegangener siamesische Bücher im Königlichen Museum für Völkerkunde", *Ethnologisches Notizblatt*, Heft 2, 1895, pp. 16-18. Dr. Müller was an Assistant (Hilfsarbeiter) in Professor Bastian's Ethnological Department at the Berlin Ethnological Museum.

²⁵ A. Bastian, "Das siamesische Prachtwerk Trai-Phum (Die 'Drei-Welt')", *Ethnologisches Notizblatt*, Vol. 2, 1895, pp. 71-75.

could no longer be found in the palace library. It was only in the previous year (1894), that by a stroke of fortune G. E. Gerini, the Director of the Military College in Bangkok,²⁶ had discovered its whereabouts. Bastian then quotes a letter, dated 8 March 1894, in which Gerini announces that soon after receiving Bastian's question regarding King Taksin's *samutphāp traiphūm*, he was able to borrow that famous text. Gerini waxes enthusiastically:

... even the King's library does not possess a copy as beautifully illustrated of the same work, and I am sure, if the King knew of this copy, he would have it at once. Its present owner is a palace lady, descendant from the family of King Phyā Tāk, and as she keeps the book as a family souvenir, would not consent to part with on any account. But I got one of her relatives with whom I am in great intimacy, to induce her to sell it to me as I would, I said, send it to a European Museum to be kept there as an everlasting specimen of Siamese figurative art of years gone by.... As I feel a great interest in not leaving this rare work into the hands of the Siamese (for it is sure to get lost or damaged some day) I have decided to try to get some European Museum to purchase it as soon as possible, because I am afraid that either the owner may change idea or the book may change hands.²⁷

The German Minister Kempermann gave Gerini 125 pounds sterling, so that he could pay 2000 baht for the document.

Gerini's stated motivation that he wished to save this unique document from being lost or damaged is a striking example of cultural imperialism of the late 19th century. Serious and respected scholars felt they had the right, nay, the duty to remove artifacts of "lesser" cultures to have them protected in European museums, for mankind's future. And indeed, the manuscript that he bought and shipped to Berlin has been very well preserved.

Who was the "palace lady, descendant from the family of King Phyā Tāk" who sold the manuscript to Gerini, and how had it passed from the palace library into her possession?

King Taksin had presented one of his wives (*Chaoying Prang*) to the ruler of the semi-independent city of Nakhon Si Thammarat. At that time she was already

²⁶ Gerolamo Emilio Gerini arrived in Bangkok in September 1881 as a lieutenant in charge of training cadets. He learnt to speak Thai fluently and in 1887 became director of the Royal Cadet's School with the Thai rank of *luang* and the name Sarassana Balakhand (Sarasat Phonlakhan). He became a well-known authority on things Thai through a wide range of publications, the most important of them dating between 1895 and 1912, all of them testifying to both a deep knowledge of Thai ritual and a genuine respect for Thai culture. Gerini was one of the founders of the Siam Society, and was elected as one of its first vice-presidents.

²⁷ Gerini's letter (27 pages long) can be found in Akte 24/3.94 in the Archives of the Berlin Ethnological Museum.

two months pregnant by the king. Her son (Noi), who ruled Nakhon Si Thammarat from 1811-1839, is therefore regarded as the founder of the “line of Taksin” which supplied the governors of Nakhon Si Thammarat continuously down to 1901, and are known as the Na Nagara family.²⁸ How the manuscript came into the possession of the family is unknown. At some time around the middle of the 19th century someone in the Na Nagara family must have decided to have a copy made of their heirloom, because it was *Chaophrayā* Suthammontri (Nū Phrom), the last member of the family to govern Nakhon Si Thammarat, who donated the Copied Manuscript to the National Library in 1900.²⁹

More anomalies

But was the manuscript that Gerini helped to convey to Bastian’s museum in Berlin really the 1776 original? In this manuscript too, there are anomalies that raise doubts.

In the sermon of nirvana a passage has been blotted out with white paint and a whole line of text inserted between the lines. Between the depiction of the world of the eight guardian generals and that of the judgment by Yāma, a whole page has been blotted out, probably because the scribes or the artists had made a mistake of such gravity that it had to be erased. This gray-black page is an ugly interruption in the long opening sequence. Five pages onward, a sequence of five words is blotted out as well as a substantial part of the following illustration, presumably a painting of some trees that were deemed unsatisfactory.

Would the completed original manuscript made for King Taksin, and subsequently kept in the palace library, have had such flaws? Is the Berlin Manuscript perhaps only a preliminary version?

²⁸ Stuart C. Munro-Hay, *Nakhon Sri Thammarat: The Archaeology, History and Legend of a Southern Thai Town*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 2001, pp. 174-175. There is a persistent belief in the province that, contrary to what the official chronicles state, in 1782 Taksin was not executed, but escaped to the south, hiding in a cave (Tham Khaokhunphanom, Amphoe Phromsiri). There a veritable King Taksin cult has developed.

²⁹ He lived from 1842 to 1907. Until 1901 he was governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat, a post that his father also had occupied. There is another intriguing bit of information on the connection between the Na Nagara family and King Taksin. In a letter, dated 16 June 1894, after informing Bastian that the manuscript had been handed over to the German Minister Kempermann, Gerini adds “the same party that sold me the book has got another relic of King Phaya Tak and this is a Siamese sword with an ivory scabbard made of a single piece of elephant tusk, magnificently carved. It is the best specimen I know of Siamese carving...” Apparently, the Berlin Museum did not pursue the matter. The question whether the Museum missed out on acquiring another major art treasure remains open. King Taksin is usually depicted together with his sword. This icon is at present reputedly in the hands of the spirit medium Thephanom Muanman. See Irene Stengs, *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: The Cult of King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2009, p. 206.

4. The Lost Manuscript

In a letter dated Thursday 18 March 1937,³⁰ Prince Damrong wrote to his half-brother Narit³¹ about a visit to the State Library in Berlin where he was shown its famous *samutphāp traiphūm*.³²

In Berlin also, the Germans were very happy to arrange a room for me to inspect the Thai books, as in England, but one day was enough as there were fewer in Berlin than in London....They showed off the Traiphūm, which Chao Piya³³ said the Germans bought for 1000 baht,³⁴ acclaiming it as the finest Thai book they had. But I was surprised not to find any book of which there is no copy in Siam. Even this Traiphūm is the royal version from the Thonburi era with the same preface, painting style and handwriting as the Traiphūm manuscript that Khun Thao Worachan presented to Phra Somdet Phraputthachao Luang [King Rama V] when he founded the Buddhist Clerical Library (Ho Phutthasasanasangka). It was the same in every respect, the same skill found in both documents, but one remarkable difference: the volume acquired by the Germans still has its old paper covers intact, but the volume that Khun Thao Worachan presented has decorated outer covers on both ends. I assume that Khun Thao Worachan's volume, which seems from the beginning to have had covers inlaid with mother-of-pearl, is the "royal version", and the volume acquired by the Germans, which was made with paper covers must be the "subsidiary version."³⁵

Although Damrong's viewing in Berlin had taken place more than six years before he wrote this letter, and he might have seen the other *traiphūm* manuscript some thirty years earlier, his statement carries much weight. He was Siam's leading historian and had a lifetime experience of handling and comparing Siamese manuscripts. He demonstrates his expertise by explaining why he assumed that the Berlin document was not the document that was prepared for King Taksin, but only a lesser version. The major difference between the two documents that came

³⁰ I thank Professor Niyada Laosunthorn for drawing my attention to this letter.

³¹ Prince Damrong's half-brother Naritsaranuwatthiwong, King Mongkut's 62nd child.

³² This visit had taken place on Friday, 25 July 1930.

³³ Chao Piya (1863-1929) was the daughter of Prince Ladāwan (Kromamuen Phuminphakdi). Her official name was Phra'ongchao Sāisawalphirom.

³⁴ In fact, the price was double this; see above.

³⁵ *Sāt Somdet, Lāiphrahat Somdet Chaofā Kromphrayā Naritsarānuwatthiwong lae Somdet Kromphrayā Damrongrātchanuphāp* Vol. 10 (2475), Bangkok: Munlanithi Kromphrayā Naritsarānuwatthiwong-Munlanithi Somdet Kromphrayā Damrongrātchanuphāp, B.E. 2550 [Princely Instructions, Correspondence of Prince Narit and Prince Damrong, Bangkok: The Naritsarānuwatthiwong and Damrongrātchanuphāp Foundations, 2007], p. 312.

to Damrong's mind when viewing the Berlin manuscript was that its outer leaves were the original simple paper, while the document that he had seen in Bangkok had been finished with properly decorated boards, inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

In Bastian's account of the manuscript he saw in 1863 he noted that the document's outer cover was decorated with the figure of an angel, named *thep phanom*.³⁶ The *thep phanom* is a standard item in Thai decorative art, a goddess depicted with her hands raised palm to palm in adoration. Since the Berlin Manuscript has no decorative cover, it seems likely that Bastian in 1863 did see the precious document that had been prepared for King Taksin, the very treasure that was kept in the royal collection, but that was not the document his museum acquired in 1893. It is clear from Gerini's letter that he did not realize that the document he acquired was not the same document that Bastian had examined in 1863 and that had since disappeared from the king's library.

Where is the *samutphāp traiphūm* with mother-of-pearl covers that Prince Damrong remembered so vividly?

Damrong tells us that this manuscript had been donated by Khun Thao Worachan to the Buddhist Clerical Library. Thao Worachan is the title held by the most senior lady in the royal household, almost invariably someone of royal blood. During the Fifth Reign Khun Thao Worachan was one of Siam's mightiest women.³⁷ The Buddhist Clerical Library was the religious library of Wat Benchamabophit, inaugurated in the year B. E. 2445 (the year beginning 15 April 1902). The collection is no longer in the original library building but in the Thammachinaraja Panchabophit Hall within the compound of Wat Benchamabophit.

In the catalogue of the library's holdings today, there is no sign of the 1776 *samutphāp traiphūm*.

The relationship between the four manuscripts

The Berlin Manuscript may well have been the first attempt to create the *samutphāp traiphūm* that King Taksin had in mind. This first version that the eight skilled craftsmen made was flawed to such an extent, that the decision must have been made to create a more worthy version. This time it passed muster and proper decorative covers were attached before it was presented to the king. This explains why these two versions, if we accept Damrong's judgement, share the same introduction, the same handwriting, and also same painting style. The rejected

³⁶ Bastian, *Reisen in Siam*, p. 403.

³⁷ She was born in 1841, daughter of Sombun and Thuai Ngamsombat. She was presented to the court and had borne King Mongkut's 61st child, Prince Sonabanthit, Kromamuen Phithayalāphruetithādā. In 1883 she had been elevated above all palace women and awarded a *sakdinā* rank of 3000. See *Kāntaengtang Khunnāng Thai nai samai Ratchakān thi 5* [The Promotion of Nobility during the Fifth Reign], Bangkok: Krom Sinlapakon, B.E. 2521 [1978], p. 302. She died in 1939.

version, still in its paper covers, must somehow have come into the possession of the Na Nagara family. In 1894, Gerini purchased this version from a member of the family, and conveyed it to Bastian in Berlin, both apparently believing that they had acquired the 1776 original, the document Bastian had seen thirty years earlier.

	Lost Manuscript	Berlin Manuscript	Thonburi Manuscript	Copied Manuscript
<i>Size</i>	Unknown	ca. 23x51 cm	ca. 30x52 cm	ca. 23x52 cm
<i>Opening sequence</i>	Presumably the text as in the Berlin manuscript	One full page text sermon on nirvana	One full page text sermon on nirvana	One line open space sermon on nirvana
<i>Topics</i>	Presumably paintings in the style of the Berlin Manuscript and text in the handwriting of the Berlin Manuscript	Vertical sequence Life of the Buddha Map of Jambudvīpa Map of seashore	Vertical sequence	Vertical sequence Life of the Buddha Map of Jambudvīpa Map of seashore Extra Jātakas
<i>Front text pages</i>	Unknown	121	133	125
<i>Reverse text pages</i>	Unknown	110	None	137
<i>Mainly inspired by</i>	Presumably as in the Berlin Manuscript	Ayutthaya 6 and 8	Ayutthaya 6	The original or the Berlin manuscript
<i>Way of writing Pāli</i>	Presumably as in the Berlin Manuscript	Pāli mainly in Thai script	Pāli mainly in Khom script	Pāli mainly in Thai script

The Copied Manuscript was made at some point in the mid-19th century by the Na Nagara family, presumably using the Berlin Manuscript as the model. In 1900, the family donated this to the Bangkok National Library.

The Thonburi Manuscript may also be a document of the late 18th or early 19th century, originally created with its first five pages blank, like many other documents of this genre. Subsequently these five pages were filled with text copied from one of the original documents made for King Taksin. This forgery must have been executed in order to pass this document off as the original, though the circumstances are unknown. This plan succeeded, since the Thonburi Manuscript has been wrongly acclaimed as the original version, made for King Taksin.

The Lost Manuscript, the complete original made to fulfil King Taksin's commission, was lodged in the palace library, where it was seen by Bastian in 1863.



The Kulāvaka-Jātaka illustrated in the Berlin Manuscript. The Bodhisatta had four wives. One of them, Suyātā, did not partake in meritorious deeds and was therefore reborn as a crane. The other three wives (Sudhammā, Cittā and Nanda) look at their former companion standing in a lake in the heavenly garden Citladāwan.

At some point after that, the document came into the possession of Thao Worachan, who in 1902 donated this precious document to the library of Wat Benchamabophit. At some point before 1937, Prince Damrong saw the Lost Manuscript. Its current whereabouts are unknown. Here the trail ends, for the time being. It is possible that the real treasure still rests somewhere in Bangkok, in a forgotten chest. Unless it is found, the Berlin Manuscript represents the only example of what the eight renowned artists could achieve in 1776. Wenk's publications of 1965, 1995 and 1998 that dealt with the Berlin Manuscript contain only a few sample illustrations, sufficient to whet the scholar's appetite.

So that this wonderful document can take its rightful place in the scholarly debate on Buddhist cosmology, there should be a full facsimile publication of the Berlin *samutphāp traiphūm*, in line with the three splendid Thai facsimile volumes of 1999 and 2004.