Note on the *Testimonies* and the *Description of Ayutthaya*

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Four historical documents that first surfaced early in the twentieth century have recently been reprinted several times. Neither in these reprints nor anywhere else does there seem to be a full account of their origins and the relationships between them. In the past I have misconstrued the origins and interrelationships. This Note is intended to help others avoid the same mistakes.

The four documents are listed here, while publication details are given in "Bibliographical notes" at the end of this Note:

- *Testimony of the Inhabitants of the Old Capital*
  คำให้การชาวกรุงเก่า [Khamhaikan chao krung kao (*KCKK*)]
- *Testimony of the King Who Entered a Wat*
  คำให้การขุนหลวงหาวัด [Khamhaikan khun luang ha wat (*KLHW*)]
- *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham*
  คำให้การขุนหลวงวัดประดู่ทรงธรรม
  [Khamhaikan khun luang wat pradu songtham (*KWPS*)]
- *Description of Ayutthaya*
  อธิบายแผนที่พระนครศรีอยุธยา [Athibai phaen thi phranakhon si ayutthaya (*APA*)].

The term *Testimony* appears to link the first three documents and indicate that all derive from the testimony of prisoners taken to Burma after the sack of Ayutthaya in 1767. In fact one of the three has completely different origins. The fourth document, *Description of Ayutthaya (APA)*, has been printed together with the *Testimonies* but also has different origins, and has nothing to do with the prisoners taken to Burma.

The story of the documents

KLHW. According to Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, a document in Mon language somehow arrived in Siam in the mid-nineteenth century. King Mongkut commanded Prince Wongsathirat Sanit[1] to arrange for its translation into Thai.[2] The contents are

[1] Nuam (1808–1871), forty-ninth son of King Rama II. He studied Western medicine from American missionaries and was minister of Mahatthai in the Fourth Reign.
[2] See Prince Damrong's preface to the 1925 edition of *KCKK*.

an account of the history of Ayutthaya from the reign of King Naresuan to the fall of the city in 1767, with notes on Ayutthaya-era royal ceremonies.

In 1882, the commoner intellectual K. S. R. Kulab[3] exhibited 150 books at an exhibition for the centenary of Bangkok. One of them was apparently the translation from Mon. It was described on the cover as follows:

> The testimony of the king who entered Wat Pradu Rongtham in the old city [Ayutthaya], namely Chaofa Dok Maduea [Prince Aubergine Flower], about customs and traditions of government in the old city.[4]

This description attributed the contents to King Uthumphon, the penultimate king of Ayutthaya, who ascended the throne briefly in 1758 before abdicating in favor of his elder brother and entering the monkhood at Wat Pradu, about half a kilometer east of the Ayutthaya island. (The *wat* was later merged with a neighboring *wat* and renamed Wat Pradu Rongtham or Songtham.) Apart from a brief exit in 1760, he remained at the *wat* until the capital fell to the Burmese in 1767, when he was taken to Amarapura along with many captive Ayutthayan nobles.

A year later in 1883, Samuel J. Smith, a former American Baptist missionary who had set up a commercial printing house in Bangkok in 1853, printed a book entitled *The Royal Chronicle of the Old City* [ราชพงษาวดารกรุงเก่า]. The explanation on the cover showed that this was the same text that Kulab had exhibited, and also described its origin in greater detail:

> The royal chronicle of the old city according to the testimony which the king who entered Wat Pradu Songtham, whose name was Chaofa Dok Maduea, compiled as a royal chronicle of Ayutthaya, so far as he could remember, and presented to the king of Ava.[5]

In the preface, Smith explained, "I have examined this document against that of Somdet Chaophraya Borommaha Si Suriyawong[6] and that of Nai Kulab, and I'm sure the content is correct across all three volumes."[7]

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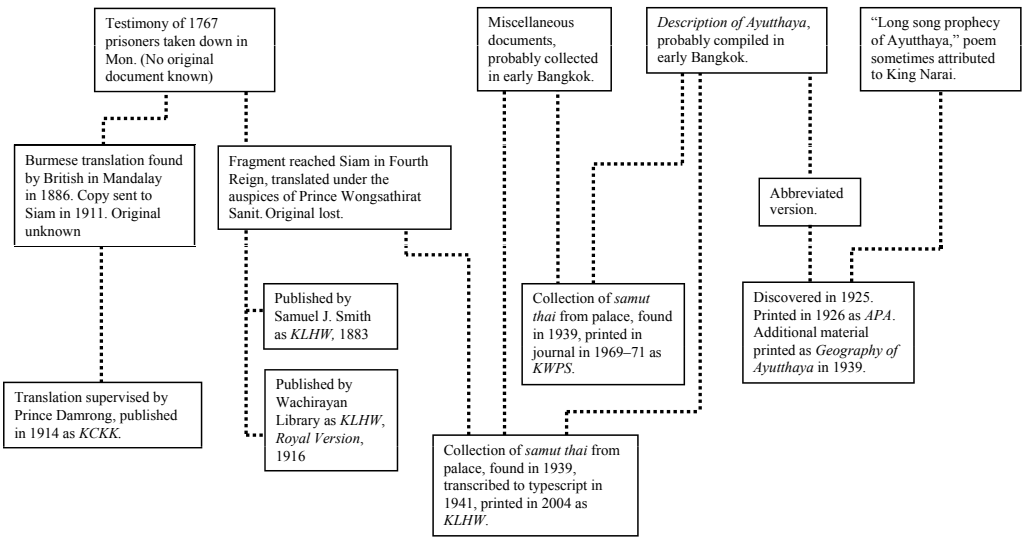
[3] See Craig J. Reynolds, "The case of K. S. R. Kulab: A challenge to royal historical writing in late nineteenth century Thailand," *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 61, no. 2 (1973).

[4] Thongchai Winichakul, "Ku lop lok taeng baep phrai khwam phit khong ko. so. ro. kulab thi tut sin doi prawatisat ammat [Fake, sneak, copy, compose as a commoner: the errors of K. S. R. Kulab as judged by official history]," *Aan* [Reading], vol. 3, no. 2 (March–June 2011), especially p. 29 quoting the thesis of Bunphisit Sihong.

[5] There is a copy of Smith's publication in the Prince Damrong Library. This excerpt is reproduced from Sunait Chutintaranond, *Phra suphankalaya jak tamnan su na prawatisat* [Princess Suphankalaya, from legend to history], (Bangkok: Prachachon, 1999), p. 58, note 10.

[6] The most powerful official of the Fourth Reign and regent at the start of the Fifth. He died in 1883.

[7] Sunait, *Phra suphankalaya*, p. 58, note 12.



Relationship between the documents discussed

While it is not clear where Kulab and Smith got the idea of attributing this text to King Uthumphon, the attribution has influenced the titling of all those documents ever since.

The publication caused some furor. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab later accused Kulab of copying the text from the palace library (*ho luang*) without authorization; however, that is far from proven, given Smith's preface showing that multiple copies of the text already existed.

Beginning in 1911, the Wachirayan Library,[8] which Prince Damrong headed, acquired five volumes of the original manuscript of the translation from Prince Wongsathirat Sanit's bequest. The volumes were entitled *Royal Chronicle Translated from Mon*. Yet the Library arranged publication of this text in 1916 as *Testimony of the King Who Entered a Wat* [i.e., *KLHW*], *Royal Version*. The words, "the King who entered a wat," had been taken from the cover of Smith's publication, while the addition of "royal version" staked a claim to greater authenticity.[9]

[8] The Wachirayan Library, named after King Mongkut's monastic name, was founded by several senior princes as a membership library inside the Bangkok palace in the early 1880s. After King Chulalongkorn had visited the British Museum and other national libraries on his European visit in 1897, the Wachirayan Library was amalgamated with other libraries as the Wachirayan Library for the Capital (often shortened to Capital Library), and moved in 1916 to a building on Na Prathat Road (now part of Silpakorn University). In 1933, the library was transformed into the National Library under the control of the new Fine Arts Department, and in 1962 moved to its current location in Thewet.

[9] Nobody has made a comparison between the Smith publication and the *Royal Version* to determine the reasons for Prince Damrong's comments on Smith. The Smith version has never been reprinted. An English translation of the historical part was published as H. S. H. Prince Vivadhanajaya, "The statement of Khun Luang Ha Wat," *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1935), pp. 143–172, and vol. 29, no. 2 (1937), pp. 123–136, but with no indication of which version had been used.

As the historical account omitted whole reigns and episodes, relevant segments from the *Testimony of the Inhabitants of the Old Capital* [*KCKK*; see below] were spliced into the text, duly labeled.

KCKK. According to Prince Damrong, during a visit to Rangoon King Chulalongkorn was shown a Burmese version of the same document, which the British had discovered when they occupied Mandalay in 1886. In 1911, the Siamese government asked the British government in Burma to provide a copy. This copy was translated into Thai, printed in 1914 as *Testimony of the Inhabitants of the Old Capital* [*KCKK*], and reprinted in 1925 with a preface by Prince Damrong. In his preface, Damrong wrote, "On examination it can be seen for certain that there are many mistakes of fact at important places; were this the testimony of King Uthumphon, he would have known matters of state too well to make such mistakes."[10] Damrong explained that he had coined the new title because the testimony had clearly been taken from many persons, not just the former king.

After comparing this "Burmese" document with the earlier "Mon" manuscript, Prince Damrong proposed that Mon born in Siam had been used to record the testimony of the Siamese war prisoners (because the Mon knew Thai), and that the testimony was originally written in Mon and then translated into Burmese.[11]

The contents of the "Burmese" version are much more extensive than those of the "Mon" document, and fall into three main parts. The first part is a much longer history, starting from beyond the foundation of Ayutthaya and ending with the city's fall. The second is a brief description of the capital and its major buildings. The third is a gazetteer of information on official positions, regalia, royal horses, royal elephants, royal barges, royal ceremonies, taxation, and expenditure.

The palm-leaf manuscripts of both the "Mon" and "Burmese" versions that had come to Siam seem to have been lost. Recently, a Burmese palm-leaf manuscript entitled *Yodaya Yazawin* [Chronicle of Ayutthaya] was discovered in the Universities Central Library collection in Yangon. An English translation by Tun Aung Chain was published in 2005.[12] It is clearly the source text of the "Burmese" version of the testimonies (i.e., *KCKK*). However, it is not the original but a copy made on 27

[10] *KCKK*, preface, 3. Damrong claimed that Kulab had edited the manuscript "in many places." See Damrong Rajanubhab, "Rueang nangsue ho luang [The palace library affair]," in *Nithan borankhadi* [Historical tales], (Bangkok: Kaona, 1962 [1944]).

[11] "Perhaps translation was a problem as no Burmese expert in Thai could be found. Only Mon who had been born in Siam knew Thai well, so they were used to question the Thai and record the answers first in Mon." Damrong's preface to the 1925 edition of *KCKK*, p. 6.

[12] Tun Aung Chain, *Chronicle of Ayutthaya: A Translation of the Yodaya Yazawin* (Yangon: Myanmar Historical Commission, 2005). The reference for the original is Palm Leaf Manuscript 11997 of the Universities Central Library Collection, Yangon.

April 1845, and may have lost the opening and closing leaves which would identify the document's history.[13] Also, the conversion from this source into the *Testimony of the Inhabitants of the Old Capital* [*KCKK*] was not a simple translation, in two ways. First, the Burmese original has the distinct flavor of the spoken word, whereas the Thai translation has added formality, like a chronicle. Second, the translator has padded the text with extra information and explanation.[14]

APA. A third manuscript was discovered in the bequest of Prince Naret Worarit[15] to the Wachirayan Library in 1925. It has two parts. The first is a version of "The Long Song Prophecy of Ayutthaya," a prophetic poem often attributed to King Narai.[16] The second is a lengthy description of the city covering walls, forts, gates, ferries, roads, bridges, checkpoints, customs posts, markets, craft settlements, *wat*, and palaces. This description is much longer and very different in scope and detail from that in the *Testimony of the Inhabitants of the Old Capital*.[17]

Both parts were printed in 1926 under the title, *Description of Ayutthaya* [*APA*],[18] and printed again in 1929 with extensive annotations by Phraya Boranratchathanin, who had pioneered the excavation and restoration in Ayutthaya. Prince Damrong contributed a preface in which he suggested that "on examination, the author was born when Ayutthaya was the capital, but authored the book in the Bangkok era."[19] In 1937, another version of this document with extra material at

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[13] See Tun Aung Chain's introduction to *Chronicle of Ayutthaya*.

[14] Here is an example, from the passage about Khun Phaen. The parts in roman come from Tun Aung Chain's translation, p. 26, while those in italic appear only in *KCKK*, p. 59.

> The King who ruled Lan Chang wanted *close relations with Ayutthaya and thus* sent many presents *of tribute* and a 16-year old daughter *of exceptional beauty* with attendants, *ambassadors carrying royal missives, and military officers to present the princes*s to the King *Phanwasa at Ayutthaya.* But before they reached Ayutthaya, Borimong [*Pothisan Ratchakuman*], King of Chiang Mai, *who wanted Lanchang to ally not with Ayutthaya but with Chiang Mai instead, thus* captured them in a way station and carried them away. The *Lanchang forces were defeated and fled back to inform their king.*

[15] 1855–1925, seventeenth son of King Mongkut. He held ministerial office and was ambassador to UK and USA. His descendants are the Kridakorn family.

[16] เพลงยาวพยากรณ์กรุงศรีอยุธยา, *Phleng phayakon krung si ayutthaya*. See Richard Cushman, translator and David K. Wyatt, editor, "Translating Thai poetry: Cushman, and King Narai's 'Long Song Prophecy for Ayutthaya'," *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 89, pp. 1–11.

[17] The version in *KCKK* has only a short overall account of the city, list of gates, list of *wat*, and short descriptions of the palaces. *APA* also has sections on roads, bridges, markets, ferries, checkpoints, craft settlements, and customs posts. The lists of city gates and palace gates in the two documents are quite different. The account of the palaces in *KCKK* is less than one tenth of the length of that in *APA*, and different in detail.

[18] See Prince Damrong's preface to the 1929 edition of *APA*.

[19] Prince Damrong's preface to the 1929 edition of *APA*, 32.

the end was found in the palace, and the additional material was printed in 1939 under the title *Geography of Ayutthaya*.[20]

KWPS. In 1932, the King's Private Secretariat was abolished. Its extensive collection of manuscripts was transferred first to the Cabinet Secretariat and later to the Fine Arts Department.[21] The collection contained a *samut thai* manuscript entitled *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham*. In that manuscript, several very different documents had been copied together:

- a description of the city of Ayutthaya
- an account of the water-oath ceremony
- a list of the palladia of the city
- three documents about royal cremations
- two accounts of royal ceremonies from the reign of King Uthumphon
- a manual on the proper conduct of royal officials
- two fragmentary accounts of late Ayutthayan history.

The description of the city is a longer version of the *Description of Ayutthaya* that had surfaced in 1925. The scope[22] and sequence are exactly the same and much of the wording is the same. The earlier-found *Description* seems to be an abbreviated (and slightly different) version of the same original document.

The title, *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham*, seems to refer to the claim on the cover of Smith's publication, strongly suggesting that the manuscript is another version of the testimony taken from Ayutthayan prisoners in Burma after 1767. That is very misleading. None of the documents in *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham* appears to be oral testimony, except perhaps one of the historical fragments. The fragments bear no relationship to the history in the "Mon" or "Burmese" versions of the *Testimony*. Perhaps the association with King Uthumphon was made because the documents on ceremonies date from his reign. No editor seems to have discussed the origin of the documents in this collection other than the *Description*;[23] but probably they, like the *Description*, were assembled early in the Bangkok era as part of the project to retrieve and preserve surviving information on the Ayutthayan kingdom.

This manuscript was eventually printed in its entirety in the journal *Talaengngan prawatisat ekkasan boranakhadi* [Historical reports and documents] over the years 1969 to 1971, and subsequently as a book in 1991 under the title *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham*.

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[20] ภูมิสถานกรุงศรีอยุธยา, *Phumisathan krung si ayutthaya*.
[21] See Winai Pongsripian's preface to *KWPS*.
[22] A small section at the beginning is missing.
[23] Except Winai Pongsripian; briefly in his preface to *KWPS*.

***KLHW* again**. Another manuscript was discovered in the Cabinet Secretariat in 1939.[24] It includes the same selection of documents in *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham*, minus the two historical fragments, plus the "Mon" version of the *Testimony* that had been printed earlier as *Testimony of the King Who Entered a Wat*. This manuscript was transcribed into a typescript in 1941 that was used for a publication in 2004 as the "complete version" of the *Testimony of the King Who Entered a Wat*.

Copying and cataloguing

There are five distinct documents in this story:

1) The Burmese version of the 1767 prisoners' testimony covering history, geography, and gazetteer. (This exists in a single version, *KCKK*, with relatively good provenance; but the Thai translation deviates considerably from the Burmese original.)

2) A fragment of the same testimony—only the history from Naresuan onwards. (It is believed to have originated from Mon interpreters, published in various different forms as *KLHW*.)

3) A verbal description of the city of Ayutthaya. (A shorter version was found first and published as *APA*. Two longer versions, with only minor differences between them, were found later and published in *KLHW* and *KWPS*. Probably this document was first compiled early in the Bangkok era.)

4) A miscellaneous bundle of documents—mainly on ceremonies. (Both *KLHW* and *KPWS* contain them with only very minor variations. Again, they were probably first compiled early in the Bangkok era.)

5) "Long Song Prophecy of Ayutthaya." (Included in *APA*, it is also available elsewhere with minor variations.)

These documents have come to be associated with each other because of the practice of copyists, not because of similar origins. *Samut thai* accordion books deteriorate over a few decades, so documents had to be constantly recopied for preservation. Copyists might include several different originals in one volume or one batch of *samut thai*, often without even titles to distinguish where one ends and another begins. Modern publication has tended to reproduce the bundled documents as found in the manuscripts, adding only some titles and subtitles. Editorial prefaces have not clarified the diverse origins of these documents and the relations between them.

[24] See preface to the Sukhothai Thammathirat University 2004 edition of *KLHW*.

The *Description of Ayutthaya* has become associated with the various *Testimony* documents as a result of being bundled together by copyists and then printed together, yet it almost certainly did not originate from the 1767 prisoners' debriefing. The account of the city which appears in the "Burmese" *Testimony of the Inhabitants of the Old Capital* bears no relation to the *Description*. Winai Pongsripian agrees with Damrong's suggestion that the *Description* was probably compiled early in the Bangkok era from the memories of people who had lived in Ayutthaya prior to 1767. He suspects it might have been compiled on royal command during the First Reign to assist with the planning of Bangkok.[25]

From its title, the *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham* would seem to be a variant version of the *Testimony of the King Who Entered a Wat*, since both titles refer to King Uthumphon. Yet the *Testimony of the King from Wat Pradu Songtham* is in fact a bundle of documents, including the *Description of Ayutthaya*, none of which seems to have come from the post-1767 debriefing.

[25] Preface to Winai's combined edition, and personal communication.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

APA Boranaratchathanin, Phraya. *Athibai phaen thi phranakhon si ayutthaya* [Description of Ayutthaya]. Bangkok: Ton chabap, 2007 [1929]. A facsimile of the 1929 edition of the short version of this document, including extensive commentary by Phraya Boranratchathanin and Prince Damrong's preface, with the addition of a facsimile of *Phumisathan krung Si Ayutthaya* [Geography of Ayutthaya], extra material from the same original document, added in 1939.

KCKK *Khamhaikan chao krung kao* [Testimony of the inhabitants of the old capital]. Bangkok: Chotmaihet, 2001 [1924]. A facsimile of the 1924 second edition, edited by Prince Damrong.

KLHW *Khamhaikan khun luang ha wat* [Testimony of the king who entered a wat]. Bangkok: Sukhothai Thammathirat University, 2004. The first publication of the bundle discovered in 1939 including the most complete version of the "Mon" testimony, and the long version of the *Description of Ayutthaya*.

KWPS *Khamhaikan khun luang wat pradu songtham: ekkasan jak ho luang* [Testimony of the king from Wat Pradu Songtham: documents from the palace]. Edited by Winai Pongsripian. Bangkok: Committee to Edit and Print Thai Historical Documents, Office of the Cabinet, 1991.

Prachum khamhaikan krung si ayutthaya ruam 3 rueang [Collection of the three Ayutthaya testimonies]. Bangkok: Saeng Dao, 2010. *KCKK*, *KLHW*, and *KWPS* in a single volume. The introduction by Thongchai Likhitphonswan has a brief summary of the history of the documents, and a useful account of the printing history. But the publication sometimes fails to distinguish between the texts and prefaces added later.

Phanna phumisathan phranakhon si ayutthaya: ekkasan jak ho luang [Geographical description of Ayutthaya: Documents from the palace]. Edited by Winai Pongsripian. Bangkok: Usakane, n. d. [2007]. An edited version of *KWPS* with additional material.