

Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha *yantras*: An Ayutthaya Period Meditation Manual from Wat Pradusongtham

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ABSTRACT—This article aims to contribute to the ongoing study of *borān kammaṭṭhāna*, the premodern Theravāda meditation tradition, by providing a detailed presentation and an analysis of a late Ayutthaya meditation manual, titled *The diagrams/rooms of the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha*, from Wat Pradusongtham, Ayutthaya. The history of Wat Pradusongtham goes back at least to the reign of King Songtham (Boromracha I, reigned 1608–1628), when it was an important *borān kammaṭṭhāna* centre and was associated with the forest-dwelling monks' division of the Saṅgha. The manual describes the practice of visualisations of three *yantra* diagrams that represent the qualities (*guṇa*) of the Triple Gems and makes use of various bodily bases, canonical and paracanonical chants and *mantras* as aids to the practice of recollections and the development of concentration (*saṃādhi*). Its interpretation is based on the author's interview with a *borān kammaṭṭhāna* teacher, Phra Khru Sitthisangwon (Wira Thānavīro), the meditation instructor at Wat Ratchasittharam, Thonburi.

Introduction

Since the 1970s, there has been ongoing research into a certain esoteric meditation tradition, found throughout the Theravāda Buddhist world, which challenged the standard descriptions of Theravāda meditation in many secondary sources. The rediscovery of collections of influential meditation manuals belonging to this tradition in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos, and pockets of surviving lineages associated with some of these manuals, have put into question prior scholarly understanding of premodern Theravāda meditation and shed light on the fact that most contemporary meditation practices in today's Theravāda societies are relatively recent products, whose developments can be traced back to no earlier than the reforms and revivals of the 19th century. This meditation tradition first became the subject of Western academic studies through the publication of *Yogāvacara's manual of Indian mysticism*¹ by T.W. Rhys Davids in 1896, and then, from the 1970s to the 2000s, a series of publications by

¹ *Yogāvacara's manual* is a Sinhalese-Pāli meditation manual found in Bambaragalavihāra, near Kandy, Sri Lanka, in 1893. It was translated as *Manual of a mystic* by F.L. Woodward in 1916.

François Bizot and his colleagues, focusing on traditional Cambodian Buddhism.²

Recent publications by Kate Crosby, Andrew Skilton, Amal Gunasena, Phibul Choompolpaisal and Pyi Phyoe Kyaw, as well as the author's PhD thesis, refer to this meditation tradition as '*borān kammaṭṭhāna/kammathāna*' and/or '*borān/old meditation*'.³ This *borān kammaṭṭhāna* tradition, which, according to Crosby's (2013: ix) findings, can be traced as far back as the 16th century, was widespread in the Theravāda region at the beginning of the modern era and practised at court, among the monastic hierarchy and in rural contexts, but was marginalised and suppressed during the reforms of the 19th and the 20th century.⁴ The phrase *borān kammaṭṭhāna*, 'traditional/ancient/old meditation', is derived from the Thai/Khmer word *borān*, 'old/traditional', and the Pāli word *kammaṭṭhāna*, a term found throughout the Pāli commentaries, and is used as a standard term for 'meditation' in Theravāda countries.⁵

The meditation manual discussed in this paper is one belonging to this *borān kammatthāna* tradition and is found in an anthology of traditional meditation manuals, titled *Phuttharangsi thritsadiyan book of samatha and vipassanā meditation of the four periods*, published in 1935.⁶ The anthology was compiled and edited by Phra Mahājotipañño (Chai Yasothonrat) of Wat Boromniwat, Bangkok, a Thammayut temple, under the supervision of the abbot, Phra Upāli Khunupamachan (Chan Siricando) (Yasothonrat 1935). It is by far the largest collection of *borān kammatthāna* texts to be published, and consists of seven collections of meditation manuscripts obtained by Phra Upāli Khunupamachan and Phra Mahājotipañño from Ubon Ratchathani, Lopburi, Ayutthaya and Bangkok, namely:

1. Vientiane meditation manuals composed by Supreme Patriarch Sutthisomphrammanachan, Somdet Phra Mahawichaithat Rajamahamuni and Phra Mahatheraphutrangsi Bawonmuniyan
2. Meditation manuals from Wat Pradusongtham, Ayutthaya
3. Thonburi and Bangkok period meditation manuals composed by Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean, Wat Ratchasittharam, and Supreme Patriarch Don, Wat Mahathat

The book is extremely important, as it provides evidence of *borān kammaṭṭhāna* being practised and taught by the Thai/Siamese and Laotian monastic establishments

² See, for example, Bizot (1976, 1988 and 1992); Bizot and von Hinüber (1994); Bizot and Lagirarde (1996); and Bernon (2000).

³ See Crosby, Skilton, and Gunasena (2012); Crosby (2013 and 2019); Skilton (2019); Skilton and Choompolpaisal (2014 and 2015); Choompolpaisal (2019 and forthcoming); Skilton, Crosby and Kyaw (2019); and Potprecha Cholvijarn (2019). This tradition has been referred to as ‘*yogāvacara*’ and ‘*tantric Theravāda*’ in prior scholarship.

⁴ For the historical developments and processes that led to the suppression and marginalisation of *borān kammathāna*, see Crosby (2013: chapter four).

⁵ For a discussion of the term *kammaṭṭhāna* in Pāli canonical and commentarial texts, see Skilton (2019: 38-47).

prior to the reforms of the 19th century. The manuals of Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean (1733–1822) in this collection, and its living tradition at Wat Ratchasittaram, Thonburi, have since been the subject of a number of academic studies, notably, those by Mettanando Bhikkhu (1998), Olivier de Bernon (2000), Patrick Ong (2013), Skilton and Choopolpaisal (2014 and 2015), as well as the author's PhD thesis (2019). In 2015, the Thammayut *nikāya* reprinted the *Phuttharangsi thritsadiyan* anthology to commemorate the royal cremation of the nineteenth Supreme Patriarch Wachirayansangwon (Charoen Suvadāhano). The book is titled *Traditional/Old meditation manuals*.⁷

This article explores a manual in the second collection of the anthology, the late-Ayutthaya meditation manuscripts from Wat Pradusongtham, Ayutthaya (Yasothonrat 1935: 267–308 and 319–373). Wat Pradusongtham was an important *borān kammaṭṭhāna* centre during the Ayutthaya period (1351–1767). It was associated with the forest-dwelling monks' (*araññavāsi*) division of the Saṅgha and was the residence of Phra Rachakhana, who was responsible for overseeing meditation practices.⁸ It is first mentioned in the Royal Chronicles as receiving the patronage of King Songtham (Boromracha I, reigned 1608–1628), the twenty-first king of Ayutthaya and the fifth monarch of the House of Sukhothai.⁹ It is also the temple where King Uthumphon, the penultimate monarch of Ayutthaya, resided as a monk after being forced to abdicate, having reigned for only two months in 1758. In 1760, King Uthumphon disrobed to help the Ayutthaya forces fight against the invading Burmese armies. After the latter's retreat, he was again ordained at Wat Pradusongtham. Shortly after his coronation, King Taksin (reigned 1767–82) invited Phra Achan Dee, a monk from Wat Pradusongtham, to become the first Supreme Patriarch of Thonburi. Two *borān kammaṭṭhāna* masters, namely Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean and Supreme Patriarch Don (1761–1852) of Wat Mahathat in Bangkok, whose meditation manuals have also been preserved in the *Phuttharangsi thritsadiyan* anthology, studied meditation at the temple. Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean was ordained as a monk at Wat Pradusongtham before taking up residence as the abbot of a nearby temple, Wat Thahoi, Ayutthaya. Thus, the meditation method at this temple may have been an influence on the *borān kammaṭṭhāna* system of Supreme Patriarch Suk and Supreme Patriarch Don, as well as other *borān kammaṭṭhāna* systems, and may have been brought from Ayutthaya to Thonburi by Phra Achan Dee during the Thonburi period (1767–1782).

In the preface, Phra Mahājotipañño (Chai Yasothonrat) states that Wat Pradusongtham's collection was obtained from Wat Manichonkhan, Lopburi, in 2478 B.E. (1935 C.E.), and the original manuscript was obtained from 'Wat Praduromgtham, Ayutthaya' and (in brackets) 'Old City' (Yasothonrat 1935: 10–11). This most likely means that Yasothonrat believed the collection goes back to the period prior to

⁷ ตำรากรรมาธฐานโบราณ.

⁸ During the Ayutthaya period, the Saṅgha was divided into two divisions: forest-dwelling monks (*araññavāsi*) and town-dwelling monks (*gāmāvāsi*). The forest-dwelling monks were responsible for overseeing meditation practices and the town-dwelling monks (*gāmāvāsi*) were responsible for administrative duties. Both divisions had their own Saṅgharāja appointed by the king. Rachakhana is the third-highest rank in the Thai/Siamese Saṅgha, below the Supreme Patriarch and Somdet Phra Rachakhana.

⁹ For a history of the temple, see Wat Pradusongtham (2012).

Ayutthaya's final destruction by the Burmese army in 1767. Choompolpaisal's 2019 article, which discusses all *borān kammaṭṭhāna* texts in the *Phuttharangsi thritsadiyan* anthology, dates this collection to sometime during the late Ayutthaya period (circa 18th century). 'Pradurongtham' is the former name of the temple, and is derived from the merging of two temples, Wat Pradu and Wat Rongtham. The name was changed to Pradusongtham during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, reigned 1868–1910).

Wat Pradusongtham's collection includes the manual titled '*Kammaṭṭhāna method: The diagrams/rooms of the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha*' (Yasothonrat 1935: 267–285).¹⁰ According to the manual, this meditation method was passed down from 'fifty-six prominent teachers of India'¹¹ in B.E. 572¹² (Yasothonrat 1935: 369). It consists of visualising three diagrams described as *yantras*.¹³ The diagrams represent three rooms (*hong*) of the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. The manual states that the fifty-six teachers inscribed the *yantras* onto a rock in a royal pool, which caused those who drank from the pool to become endowed with wisdom (Yasothonrat 1935: 369). The *yantras* can be used to make sacred water to cure illnesses, to prolong lives, to bring wealth, and to serve as protection against ghosts, thieves and enemies (Yasothonrat 1935: 369–70).

This article provides a detailed presentation and an analysis of the manual, focusing on the first diagram (the Buddha's qualities). In order to avoid making generalisations and speculations regarding some of the terse, ambiguous and cryptic passages in the manual, its interpretation is based on my interview with Phra Khru Sitthisangwon (Wira Thānavīro henceforth 'Luang Pho Wira') (1949–),¹⁴ the meditation instructor at Wat Ratchasittharam, Thonburi, and the lineage holder of the 'Kammathan Matchima Baep Lamdap'¹⁵ method of Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean. As mentioned above, the meditation lineages of the two temples are connected, as Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean was trained at Wat Pradusongtham prior to becoming the abbot of Wat Thahoi, Ayutthaya. After King Taksin was deposed, Supreme Patriarch Suk was invited by King Rama I (reigned 1782–1809) to the newly established Bangkok to reside at Wat Phlap as the head of meditation.¹⁶ Wat Ratchasittharam was later built by Rama I next to Wat Phlap. The two temples then merged to become a single temple, which has ever since been known as Wat Ratchasittharam. I have met and interviewed Luang Pho Wira a number of times regarding Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean's meditation and its influence on

¹⁰ ແບບຂຶ້ນກຣມສູານ ທ່ອງພຸກອຄຸນ ອຣມຄຸນ ສັ້ນຂຄຸນ.

¹¹ ນ້ອຍນປະເທສ, literally 'middle country'; synonymous with India. The number '56' is an auspicious number that corresponds to the fifty-six syllables of the *Iti Pi So* formula.

¹² This would be the year 29 C.E.

¹³ *Yantras* are protective diagrams consisting of geometrical, animal and deity designs accompanied by Pāli phrases. They can come in different forms, such as an etching on a flat piece of metal, ink drawn on a piece of cloth, or as tattoos on different parts of the body.

¹⁴ Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, 15 September 2020.

¹⁵ ກຣມສູານນັ້ນມະນີມາແບບລໍາເລີບ, translated as 'the progressive training of the mind in the middle way employing meditation subjects' (see Skilton and Choompolpaisal 2014: 90).

¹⁶ ພຣະຈາກຄະນະຝ່າຍວິປໍສສນາອຸຮະ 'Phra Rachakhana Fai Wipatsanathura'. 'Fai Wipatsanathura' means that the monk is recognised as a meditation teacher and is responsible for overseeing the practice of meditation (Pāli: *vipassanā-dhura*). For Supreme Patriarch Suk's biographical information, see Sangkharak (2012).

Phra Mongkhon Thepmuni (Sot Candasaro) and Sammā Araham meditation.¹⁷ Luang Pho Wira is familiar with the three *yantras* and recognises the practices described in the manual. He explained that the diagrams used to be incorporated into the highest level of Kammathan Matchima Baep Lamdap. However, today the method is no longer practised or taught at Wat Ratchasittharam (Sitthisangwon 2020).

Prior to interviewing Luang Pho Wira, I was made aware by Choompolpaisal (2019) of the living meditation lineage at Wat Pradusongtham. I visited the temple and discussed the manual with the abbot, Phra Damrong Thiṭāsabho (1951–), who recommended that I contact Prayok Niamnet, or Achan Daeng (1950–), the temple's lay meditation instructor. I visited Achan Daeng at his home in Nonthaburi¹⁸ and was informed that the method currently taught at Wat Pradusongtham is a simplified version of the old one, as the lineage has suffered a number of setbacks over the years due to the theft, loss and destruction of many important manuscripts (Niamnet 2019). Achan Daeng is not familiar with the three *yantras* and the practices described in the manual. Choompolpaisal (2019: 24), who interviewed Surat Songsakaew (1936–), another lay meditation teacher in Wat Pradusongtham's lineage, confirms that due to theft and destruction, many manuscripts have been lost, and this manual is no longer available at the temple. Wat Pradusongtham was destroyed during the sack of Ayutthaya in 1767 and its meditation lineage has not received royal patronage since at least the Thonburi period. These events, along with the Saṅgha reforms in the 19th and the 20th century, which resulted in the preference for more rationalised and simplified approaches to meditation, have most likely led to the marginalisation and decline of the lineage.¹⁹

Presentation of the manual

The first *yantra*, the diagram/room of the qualities of the Buddha, contains fifty-six circles. Each circle has a number and a Khom²⁰ syllable taken from the first section of the *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula, a canonical Pāli verse describing the qualities (*guṇa*) of the Buddha: *iti pi so bhagavā araham sammāsaṃbuddho vijjācaraṇaśaṃpanno sugato lokavidū anuttarapurisadammasārathi satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā ti*.²¹

¹⁷ Also known as Dhammakāya Meditation (Thai: Witcha Thammakai); see Cholvijarn's (2019) *The origins and development of Sammā Araham meditation: From Phra Mongkhon Thepmuni (Sot Candasaro) to Phra Thep Yan Mongkhon (Sermchai Jayamaṅgalo)*.

¹⁸ Interview of Prayok Niamnet by the author on 3 July 2019.

¹⁹ The methods advocated by the Burmese *vipassanā* and the Thai forest monk traditions are two of the most well-known examples of these rationalised and simplified approaches to meditation that over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries replaced *borān kammaṭṭhāna* as the dominant meditation traditions in Theravāda countries. As Skilton and Choompolpaisal (2015: 207) write: '[These meditation traditions] stem from a variety of reform movements that emerged in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka from the early nineteenth century onwards and are based usually on textual models. The selection of canonical texts for this function gives some reform meditations ancient roots and invokes the assumption of uninterrupted lineages transmitting ancient practices from the Buddha's day to this'. See also Crosby (2013: chapter four).

²⁰ In traditional Thai Buddhism, Khom (ຂອມ) script, which is closely related to Khmer script, is regarded as sacred and is commonly used in the making of *yantras*, tattoos and inscriptions on amulets, images and other sacred objects.

²¹ 'The Blessed One is an *arahant*, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct,

The circles are arranged so that in order to get from one to the next, the meditator visualises them in L-shaped and clockwise directions. Luang Pho Wira calls the diagrams ‘horse tables’²² as L-shaped directions correspond to the way the knight moves in chess (Sithisangwon 2020).

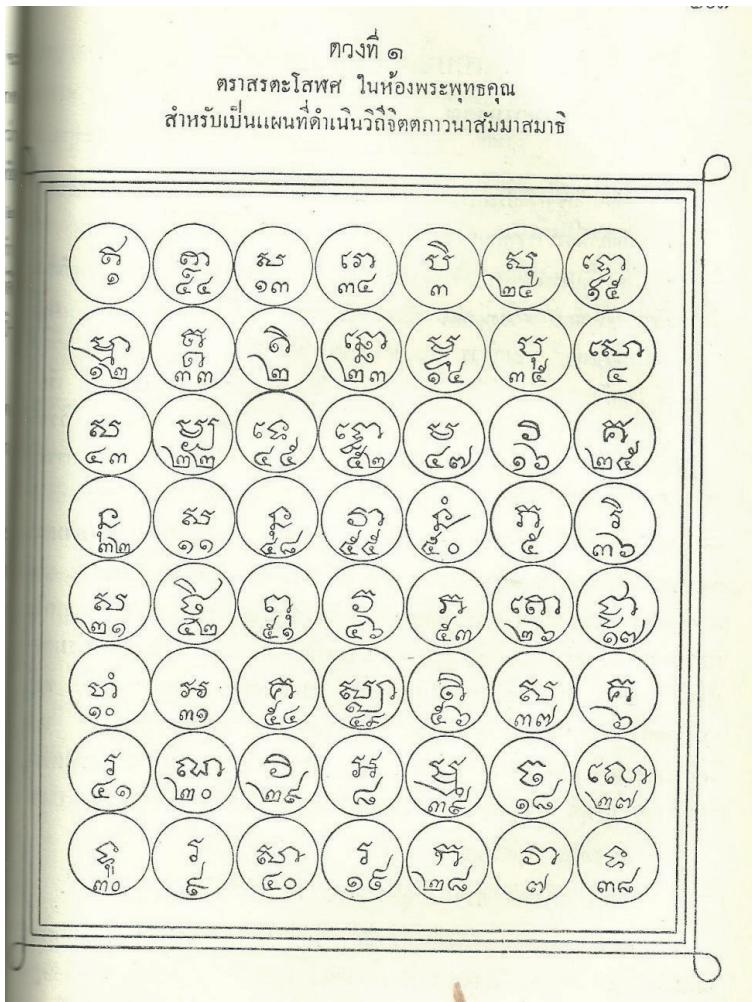


Figure 1. The qualities of the Buddha yantra. (Yasothonrat 1935: 267)

The *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula is found throughout the Pāli canon (Tipiṭaka). The qualities (*guṇas*) of the Triple Gems, described in it, are said to be constantly recollected by exemplary individuals who are endowed with faith.²³ In the *Dhajagga Sutta* (S I 218), the Buddha advises monks that they should recite this formula to recollect the Triple Gems in order to dispel fear. The *sutta* not only became the basis for the practice

fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of *devas* and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One’; translation by Bodhi (2000: 319).

²² ชาจังນາ

²³ See, for example, *Mahānāma Sutta* (S V 371); *Vera Sutta* (A V 182); *Dhana Sutta* (A IV 5); and *Gihī Sutta* (A III 211). In references to the Pāli canon, I give the volumes and page numbers of the Pali Text Society editions.

of recollections of the Triple Gems, but also the chanting of protective texts (*paritta*). In Thailand and other Theravāda countries, the formula is part of standard chanting books and some of its syllables and verses are used in protective tattoos, drawn on *yantras* and inscribed on images and amulets. The usage of the formula as *mantras* and *yantras* in

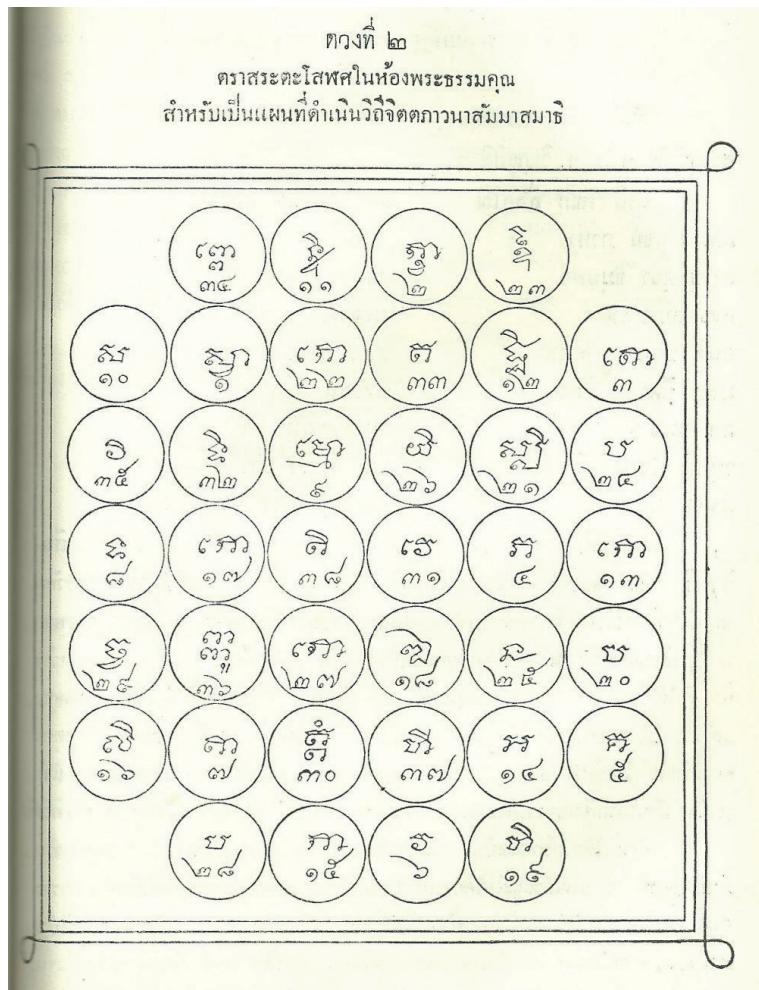


Figure 2. The qualities of the Dhamma yantra. (Yasothonrat 1935: 275)

Cambodia has been identified by Bizot and von Hinüber (1994: 69–84) in *La guirlande de joyaux*.²⁴ The visualisation of *yantras* as a meditation exercise is also common in *borān kammaṭṭhāna*. The *Phuttharangsi thritsadiyan* anthology contains many elaborate diagrams, one of which is a diagram of mythical serpents, or *nāgas*, which became its front cover. The Vientiane text in the anthology also contains a diagram of the footprint of the Buddha as an object of visualisation (Yasothonrat 1935: 162).

The diagram/room of the qualities of the Dhamma contains thirty-eight circles, each with a number and a Khom syllable taken from the second section of the *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula describing the qualities of the Dhamma: *svākhāto bhagavatā*

²⁴ See also Trent Walker (2018).

*dhammo sandīthiko akāliko ehipassiko opanayiko paccatām veditabbo viññūhī ti.*²⁵ The meditator is likewise to visualise the circles in L-shaped and clock-wise directions from one to thirty-eight.

The diagram/room of the qualities of the Saṅgha contains 121 circles each with a number and a Khom syllable taken from the third section of the *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula describing the qualities of the Saṅgha: *supatipanno bhagavato sāvagasaṅgho ujupatipanno bhagavato sāvagasaṅgho nāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvagasaṅgho*

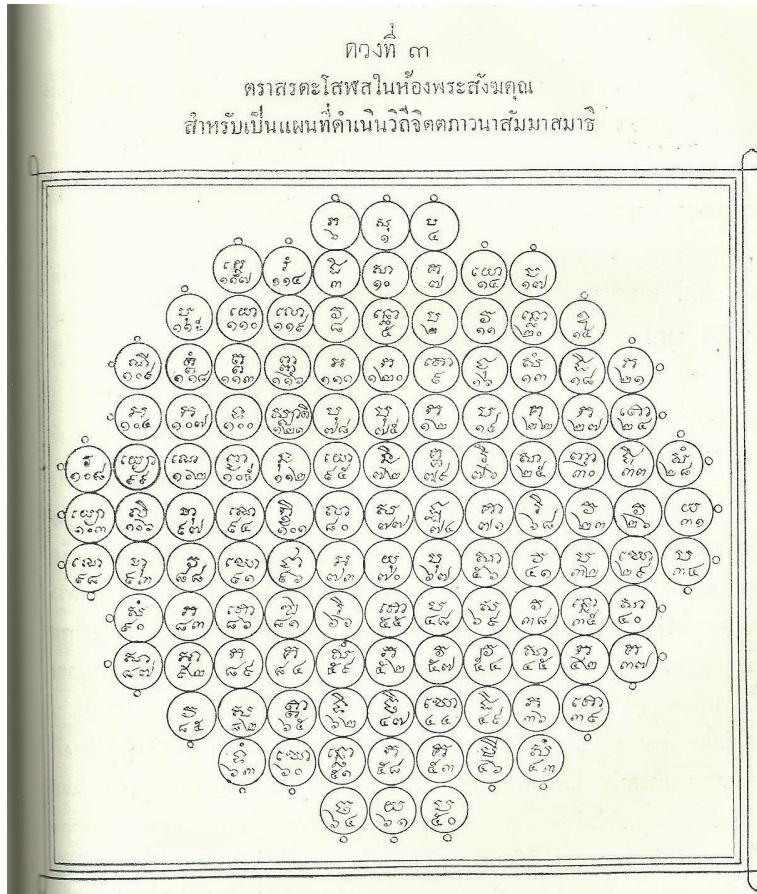


Figure 3. The qualities of the Saṅgha yantra. (Yasothonrat 1935: 281)

*sāmīcipatipanno bhagavato sāvagasaṅgho yadidām cattāri purisa yugāni atīha purisa puggalā esa bhagavato sāvagasaṅgho āhuneyyo pāhuṇeyyo dakkhineyyo añjalikaraṇīyo anuttaram puññākhettam lokassā ti.*²⁶ Again, the meditator is to visualise the circles in L-shape and clock-wise directions from one to 121.

Although the manual is no longer practised, the three diagrams are still produced as

²⁵ ‘The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise’; translation by Bodhi (2000: 320).

²⁶ ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples is practising the good way, practising the straight way, practising the true way, practising the proper way; that is, the four pairs of persons, the eight types of individuals — this Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field of merit for the world’; translation by Bodhi (2000: 320).

yantras throughout Thailand and are recognised as originating from Wat Pradusongtham. For example, the *yantras* below were consecrated at Wat Mai Amphon, Nakhon Ratchasima, in April 2004, by the well-known meditation monk, Phra Thep Wittayakom or Luang Pho Khun Parissuddho (1923-2015), Wat Ban Rai, Nakhon Ratchasima. The caption states that the *yantras* were taken from the manuals of Wat Pradusongtham and Luang Pu Suk (1847-1923), Wat Pak Khlong Makhamthao, Chainat.

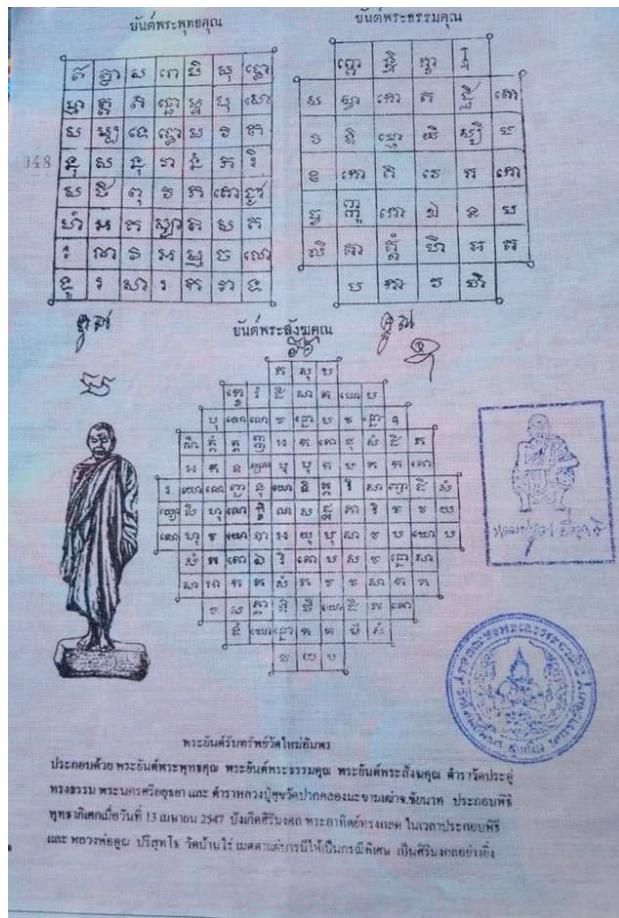


Figure 4. Wat Mai Amphon's *yantras*. (Photo P. Cholvijarn)

The diagram of the qualities of the Buddha

The diagram of the qualities of the Buddha can be divided into four main parts: 1) pre-meditation litany; 2) three preparatory exercises; 3) two visualisations of the Buddha's qualities diagram; and 4) removal of *nimittas* (image manifestations) (Yasothonrat 1935: 267-274).

The first part consists of the meditator washing his/her body and clothes, invoking

the five restraints (*saṃvara*)²⁷ and the four bases of spiritual powers (*iddhi-pāda*),²⁸ and offering his/her life to the Triple Gems. The manual cites three Pāli verses to be recited: 1) the Buddha's qualities section of the *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula; 2) an excerpt from the *bot khat*²⁹ of the *Ratana Sutta* (Sn 222-238); and 3) the Buddha's spirited utterance from the *Sāriputta Sutta* (Udāna 43). The first two chants describe the various qualities of the Buddha,³⁰ while the spirited utterance describes the qualities of the meditation adepts.³¹

The second part of the manual (preparatory exercises) instructs the meditator to take 'Lokuttara Jhāna 19' and 'set' ten of them at the navel and nine at the top of the head:

Set the *Lokuttara Jhāna 19*, that is, *lokuttaraṃ jhānaṃ pe lokuttaraṃ samathaṃ jhānaṃ*, altogether 10 at the lower *atsadakat* [navel]. Set *lokuttaraṃ dhammaṃ jhānaṃ pe lokuttaraṃ cetanaṃ jhānaṃ*, altogether 9 at the upper *atsadakat* [top of the head]. (Yasothonrat 1935: 268-269)³²

One main characteristic of the *borān kammaṭṭhāna* tradition, which is often dismissed and/or misunderstood by modern scholars and practitioners, is that the meditation objects, processes and states described in the Pāli canon and Buddhaghosa's *Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*) are usually experienced as *nimittas*³³ (image manifestations) on and inside the meditator's body.³⁴ The *nimittas* of these objects, processes and states are described differently in different *borān kammaṭṭhāna* texts, but are usually experienced as spheres of light or gems of various colours.³⁵ These light

²⁷ The five *saṃvars* are: restraints in conduct (*sīla*), of mindfulness (*sati*), of knowledge (*ñāṇa*), of patience (*khanti*), and of effort (*viriya*).

²⁸ The four bases of spiritual powers are intention (*chanda*), effort (*viriya*), thoughts (*citta*), and investigation (*vīmamsa*)

²⁹ *Bot khats* (ບ່ອດຂ່າດ) are paracanonical Pāli verses of unknown date and author that serve as preliminary chants to introduce and explain the context of important chanting texts. In the Thai chanting tradition, the texts that contain their own *bot khats* include *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (S V 420), *Anattālakkhana Sutta* (S III 66), *Dhammaniyāma Sutta* (A I 286), *Ādittapariyāya Sutta* (S IV 19), etc. *Bot khats* appear in popular chanting books, such as the seven and twelve *paritta* or *tamnan* collections.

³⁰ This excerpt, from the *bot khat* of the *Ratana Sutta*, mentions the Buddha's thirty perfections (*pāramī*), omniscience (*sabbāññuta-ñāṇa*), nine supramundane (*lokuttara*) *dhammas*, five great sacrifices (*mahāparicāga*) and three conducts (*cariyā*).

³¹ *adhicetaso appamajjato munino monapathesu sikkhato sokā na bhavanti tādino upasantassa sadā satīmatoti*, which is translated as 'of heightened awareness and heedful, the sage trained in sagacity's way: he has no sorrows, one who is such, calmed and ever mindful' (Thanissaro Bhikkhu 2012).

³² ຕັ້ງ ໂລກຖຸຕະ ລານ ၈၈ ຄື່ວ ໂລກຖຸຕະ ລານ ແລະ ໂລກຖຸຕະ ສປສ ລານ ຈົມເປັນ ၈၀ ທີ່ອັບກູາກາຄເບື້ອງຕໍ່າ, ຕັ້ງ ໂລກຖຸຕະ ອມ່ງລານ ແລະ ໂລກຖຸຕະ ເຈນ ລານ ຈົມເປັນ ၈၇ ທີ່ອັບກູາກາຄເບື້ອງບະນ.

³³ *Nimitta* (Thai: *nimit*) is a Pāli term variously translated as a sign of concentration, an image manifestation, an eidetic image or a mental image and refers to different kinds of visions that arise in meditation. The term is often associated with the practice of *kasīna* visualizations. For Pāli textual references, see, for example, *Bhikkhunupassaya Sutta* (S V 154), *Upakkilesa Sutta* (M II 152), *Saṅgañikārāma Sutta* (A III 422-23) and *Visuddhimagga* (chapters IV and VIII).

³⁴ For a discussion of the common characteristics of the tradition, see, for example, Crosby (2013: 14-17, 92-97; and 2019: 139-144).

³⁵ See Crosby (2013: 93; 2019: 141).

spheres are regarded as the visual manifestations of the meditator's own consciousness (*citta/chit*) that has attained the meditation objects, processes or states invoked. The meditator then manipulates these sphere *nimittas* and moves them to the various bodily bases within and on his/her body.³⁶ The locations of the bodily bases vary in different texts, but the most common are the bases along the breath passage. A different manual from Wat Pradusongtham's collection in the *Phuttharangsi thritsadiyan* anthology provides an illustration of nine bodily bases:



Figure 5. Diagram of nine bodily bases in the Wat Pradusongtham collection (Yasothonrat 1935: 293)

The first exercise mentions two of these bodily bases: the navel (base one) and the top of the head (base eight). According to Luang Pho Wira, 'Lokuttara Jhāna 19' refers to a Pāli *mantra* of unknown date and author, which consists of nineteen short verses (Sithisangwon 2020). Each verse begins with the word *lokuttaram* (supramundane), ends with *jhānam* (absorption), and from verses two to nineteen different middle words are inserted.³⁷ For example, verse two consists of the word *satipaṭṭhāna* (foundation

³⁶ For example, in Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean's meditation, its first level consists of the meditator experiencing the five kinds of joys both as bodily sensations and as light spheres. Once the light spheres are invoked by the meditator, they are moved around the body to the various bodily bases between the nostril and the navel in specific patterns and sequences. For further discussions, see Skilton and Choompolpaisal (2014 and 2015).

³⁷ Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean's manual in the anthology provides this chant as follows: 1) *lokuttaram jhānam*; 2) *lokuttaram satipaṭṭhāna jhānam*; 3) *lokuttaram sammappadhānam jhānam*; 4) *lokuttaram iddhipādaṇ jhānam*; 5) *lokuttaram indriyam jhānam*; 6) *lokuttaram balaṇ jhānam*; 7) *lokuttaram bojjhaṅgam jhānam*; 8) *lokuttaram maggam jhānam*; 9) *lokuttaram saccam jhānam*; 10) *lokuttaram samatham jhānam*; 11) *lokuttaram dhammam jhānam*; 12) *lokuttaram khandham jhānam*; 13) *lokuttaram āyatanaṇ jhānam*; 14) *lokuttaram dhatum jhānam*; 15) *lokuttaram āhāram jhānam*; 16) *lokuttaram phassam jhānam*; 17) *lokuttaram vedanam jhānam*; 18) *lokuttaram sunñam jhānam*; and 19) *lokuttaram cetanam jhānam* (Yasothonrat 1935: 238-239). The chant is still used at the high level of Suk Kai Thuean's system after the four mundane (*lokiya*) *jhānas* are achieved (Sithisangwon 2020).

of mindfulness) as the middle word. The verses are sometimes rearranged into various permutations in order to construct different versions of the *mantra*.³⁸ The word ‘*pe*’ is a standard abbreviation often used in Pāli texts. To set ten verses at the navel and nine at the top of the head means that the meditator is to recite verses one to ten while the mind is focused on the navel and verses eleven to nineteen while the mind is focused on the top of the head (Sitthisangwon 2020).

The second preparatory exercise consists of the meditator ‘setting’ the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*)³⁹ at the seven bodily bases in forward and reverse orders: 1) mindfulness (*sati*) at the navel; 2) investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*) above the navel; 3) energy (*viriya*) at the chest; 4) joy (*pūti*) at the base of the throat; 5) tranquility (*passaddhi*) at the occipital part of the head; 6) concentration (*samādhi*) at the top of the head; and 7) equanimity (*upekhā*) between the eyebrows (Yasothonrat 1935: 269).⁴⁰ The seven bases correspond to seven of the nine bases in the above diagram, i.e. bases one, two, three, four, six, eight and seven. This is performed similarly as before. The meditator is to recite ‘*sati-sambojjhaṅga*’ while the mind is placed at the navel, recite ‘*dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*’ while the mind is placed at the base two finger-breadths above the navel, recite ‘*viriya-sambojjhaṅga*’ while the mind is placed at the chest, recite *pūti-sambojjhaṅga* while the mind is placed at the base of the throat, recite ‘*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*’ while the mind is placed at the occipital part of the head, recite ‘*samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*’ while focusing at the top of the head, and recite ‘*upekhā-sambojjhaṅga*’ while focusing at the base between the eyebrows (Sitthisangwon 2020). The exercise is said to be done in forward and reverse orders (*anuloma* and *paṭiloma*) i.e. from ‘*dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*’ to ‘*upekhā-sambojjhaṅga*’ and back to ‘*dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*’ again. By reciting these Pāli words, the meditator is attempting to induce the attainment of the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) to appear as bright spheres at the designated points in the body. This practice of reciting Pāli phrases to achieve specific meditation states is called ‘*parikamma*’ (preparatory work) and is a common practice in *borān kammaṭṭhāna*.⁴¹

In the third preparatory exercise, the meditator is to ‘take’ the ‘*lokuttaraṃ cittam jhānam*’, ‘the refuge of the mind’, and move it to the base between the eyes, then, to

³⁸ For example, the Vientiane collection in the *Phuttharangsi thritsadiyan* anthology provides seven versions of this *mantra*, two to six being different rearrangements of the first version (Yasothonrat 1935: 171-176).

³⁹ The seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) are found throughout the Pāli canon and refer to the wholesome factors that lead to the attainment of *nibbāna*. In two *Gilāna Suttas* (S V 79-81) and the *Viraddha Sutta* (S V 82), recitation of the *bojjhaṅgas* is said to have cured the Buddha and Mahā Kassapa of illnesses. The three *suttas* have long been recited as *parittas* to protect against illnesses and physical pain.

⁴⁰ ๑. ລຕີສັນໂຟ່ຈະນົງ ທີ່ອ້າງງາກເບື້ອງຕໍ່ ๒. ອັນນະຈິຍສັນໂຟ່ຈະນົງ ທີ່ສູງທີ່ອນາກີ ๓. ລວມສັນໂຟ່ຈະນົງ ທີ່ກໍ່ທັຍວ່າດຸ ๔. ປີຕີສັນໂຟ່ຈະນົງ ທີ່ຄອກລາວງ ๕. ປັສລົກທີ່ສັນໂຟ່ຈະນົງ ທີ່ຄົງເຮັດກໍາຍກ່ອຍ ๖. ສມາອີສັນໂຟ່ຈະນົງ ທີ່ອ້າງງາກເບື້ອງສູງ ๗. ຖຸເບກຂາສັນໂຟ່ຈະນົງ. ທີ່ກີພສູງກ່ວ່າງຄົວ ທຳໃຫ້ເບັນອຸ່ນປົກລົມປົກລົມ. The lower ‘*atsadakat*’ refers to the base at the navel and the upper ‘*atsadakat*’ refers to the top of the head. ‘*Khokluang*’ refers to the middle of the base of the neck, and ‘*hathai watthu*’ (Pāli: *hadaya-vatthu*) or the heart-base refers to the middle of the chest. ‘Above the navel’ refers to the base two finger-breadths above the navel (Sitthisangwon 2020).

⁴¹ For example, Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean’s meditation uses ‘*sammā araham*’ as one of its main *parikammas*. See also Crosby (2019: 140) for the usage of *parikamma* in *borān kammaṭṭhāna* manuscripts dating to the 18th century from Sri Lanka.

the tip of the nose in forward and reverse orders (Yasothonrat 1935: 269).⁴² *Lokuttaram cittam jhānam* is described as a ‘neutral *dhamma*’, ‘the resting place and the food of the mind/heart’ and ‘having happiness and delight as food’ (Yasothonrat 1935: 269).⁴³ According to Luang Pho Wira, at this stage, the meditator who has achieved *nimitta* light spheres of many colours at the bodily bases combines them into a single sphere of white light, which is regarded the meditator’s attainment of ‘*lokuttaram cittam jhānam*’ or supramundane mental absorption (Sithisangwon 2020). The meditator recites ‘*lokuttaram cittam jhānam*’ while moving the sphere of white light from between the eyes to the tip of the nose and back to between the eyes again (Sithisangwon 2020).

Having achieved the ‘*lokuttaram cittam jhānam*’ sphere, the meditator begins the third part of the section, which consists of visualising the Buddha’s qualities diagram twice: firstly, row by row, i.e. from the first circle of the top row to the last circle of the bottom row, in forward and reverse orders; and secondly, in numerical order from the first circle to the fifty-sixth circle, in forward and reverse orders (Yasothonrat 1935: 269). The visualisation of the circles row by row would proceed through the Buddha’s qualities diagram in the following order: 1) *i, thā, sa, ro, pi, su, dho*; 2) *mā, ta, ti, no, bud, pu, so*; 3) *sa, pan, de, dho, ma, vi, ga*; 4) *nu, sa, nu, vā, nam, bha, ri*, etc. The manual informs the meditator to chant, while visualising ‘the verses of the room of the qualities of the Buddha’, which it quotes in full (Yasothonrat 1935: 270-274). These verses refer to the *Iti Pi So Ratanamālā* chant. The *Iti Pi So Ratanamālā* is a paracanonical Pāli chanting text with an unknown date and author. It takes syllables from the Pāli *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula, fifty-six syllables from the qualities of the Buddha, thirty-eight syllables from the qualities of the Dhamma, and fourteen syllables from the qualities of the Saṅgha, for a total of 108. For each of the 108 syllables, it adds Pāli stanzas to elaborate further on the qualities of the Triple Gems.⁴⁴ The verses are chanted in protective rituals and Buddha image consecration ceremonies. They are also tattooed and drawn on *yantras* throughout Thailand, Burma (Myanmar), Laos and Cambodia.⁴⁵ The earliest reference to this text is an inscription found in Pagan (Bagan), Burma, dated 1442 C.E. (Swearer 2004: 71). The meditator is to visualise each of the circles from the first to last row, and for each syllable, recite the corresponding verses from the *Iti Pi So Ratanamālā* at the same time. After he/she completes the first visualisation, the second visualisation is performed in the numerical order. The meditator again visualises the first circle to the fifty-sixth circle while reciting the corresponding verses from the *Iti Pi So Ratanamālā*. This is to be done in forward and reverse orders. At this stage, the manual

⁴² ណាន ໂຄງການ ຈິຕ່າງໆ ລາວ ເປັນທີ່ພື້ນຂອງຈິຕ່າງໆແລ້ວເລື່ອນມາທີ່ມໍາຫາກີພພສູ ຄືອນຍັນທ້າທັ້ງສອງຂ້າງ ເລື່ອນມາທີ່ສູນປາລຍນາສຶກ ເປັນອຸ່ນໂລມແລະປົກລົມ.

⁴³ กรรมการสำรวจเป็นที่พักแลเป็นอาหารของใจ คือมีปิติและปราโมทย์เป็นที่กักษา.

⁴⁴ For example, for the syllable ‘pi’ (the third syllable), the *Ratanamālā* elaborates with the verses: ‘piyodeva manussānāpi yobrahmānāmuttamo piyonāgasupāṇīnāpi piṇindriyaṇānamāmihām’, which describes the Buddha as most beloved among humans, *devas*, *brahmā*, *nāgas* and *garudas* (Yasothonrat 1935: 270). All the syllables of the entire formula for the Buddha (fifty-six) and the Dhamma (fourteen) are used in the first two sections of the chant. However, only the first fourteen syllables of the formula for the Saṅgha are used in the third section.

⁴⁵ For discussions regarding its usage in Northern Thai Buddha image consecration ceremonies, see Swearer (2004); and for its Cambodian editions and usages, see Bizot and von Hinüber (1994) and Walker (2018).

states that the meditator should be able to obtain *nimittas* (a mental image) of the whole diagram and to enlarge and contract it at will (Yasothonrat 1935: 269).

The fourth and final part of this section (removing the *nimittas*) begins with the following statement:

Lift the mind, *lokuttaram cittam jhānam*, until one dispels *prakṛti* = *parā* = *aparā*. *Kāya-sukham*, bodily happiness, and *citta-sukkham*, mental happiness, arise in me. When the body is happy and the mind is happy, one becomes *santuṣṭho*, one who is content, *sallekho*, one of pure conduct, *pahitatto*, one who has as a good destiny (Yasothonrat 1935: 269).⁴⁶

The words ‘*lokuttaram cittam jhānam*’ again refer to the sphere of white light, which is the visual manifestation of the meditator’s consciousness (*citta/chit*) that has attained the supramundane absorption. Luang Pho Wira explains that to use this sphere to ‘dispel *prakṛti* = *parā* = *aparā*’ means to use the supramundane absorption to dispel all negative and unwholesome physical and mental states, which are manifested as sphere *nimittas* (Sithisangwon 2020). In *borān kammaṭṭhāna*, not only the wholesome and the mental states, but also the unwholesome and the physical states that occur during meditation, are manifested as light sphere *nimittas* of various colours; and to dispel them means to get rid of those *nimittas* through mental attainment. At the same time, the meditator is to remove all other *nimittas* (mental images) that he/she acquired during the meditation session—i.e. the circles, the numbers, the Khom syllables, etc.—in order to achieve mental and bodily happiness, contentment and emptiness (Sithisangwon 2020). The rationale behind the *borān kammaṭṭhāna* path is that the meditator progresses through each level by gradually abandoning unwholesome states of consciousness (*akusala-citta*) and building up more and more refined and wholesome states (*kusala-citta*), that culminate in the attainment of the paths (*magga*) and fruits (*phalas*) of the noble ones (*ariya*).⁴⁷

It is unknown why the manual uses the Sanskrit words *prakṛti*, *parā* and *aparā* to refer to the negative physical and mental states. In the next section (Dhamma’s qualities diagram), *aparā* is stated to consist of ‘earth, water, wind, fire, space, mind (*mana*), intelligence (*buddhi*) and false-ego (*ahaṅkāra*)’ and *parā* is stated to be ‘the subject and cause of *lokānuvāṭta*’, or the conditioned world (*saṃsāra*) (Yasothonrat 1935: 277).⁴⁸ These notions, which are absent from other *borān kammaṭṭhāna* texts, are not Theravāda Buddhist in origin, but are found in Hindu scriptures, most notably, in the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.4-14).⁴⁹ They refer to the material (*aparā*)

⁴⁶ ໃຫຍ່ກິລິຕົ່ງ, ໂຄງໝາຮ່ວງ ລືຖ່າໜ້ານ ຈົນທໍາລາວ ປະກົດຕີ = ປຣາ = ອປຣາ ໄດ້ແລ້ວ ກາຍສຸ່ ຄວາມສຸຂາຍ ຈິຕົ່ງສຸ່ ຄວາມສຸ່ຈິຕົ່ງ ຈັກເກີດມີທີ່ອ່ານມາ ເມື່ອກາຍເປັນສຸ່ ຈິຕົ່ງເປັນສຸ່ແລ້ວ ສນຸ່ງກົງໂອ ເປັນຜູ້ສັນເດືອ ສລຸລົມໃໝ່ ເປັນຜູ້ປະພັດຕິ ຂັດເກລາ ປົກຕະໂຈ ເປັນຜູ້ມີຕົນສົ່ງໄປສຸ່ຄຸນຄວາມດີເປັນເບື້ອງທ່ານ.

⁴⁷ See Crosby (2019: 133).

⁴⁸ ປະກົດຕີ = ອປຣາ ໄດ້ແກ່ ອາຫຸ້ອີນ ນ້ຳ ໃຟ ລມ ອາກາສ ມນະ ພູກອີ ອັກກາຈະ ປຣາ ໄດ້ແກ່ ປະອານແລະນູລເຫດຸອງ ໂຄກວັງງົງໝາ.

⁴⁹ The *Bhagavad-gītā* is considered one of the best-known scriptures of Hinduism. Dated circa 2nd century BCE., it is a part of the Indian Sanskrit epic, *Mahābhārata*, and recounts the dialogue between Arjuna, the

and the mental (*parā*) aspects of the created world (*prakṛti*). *Parā prakṛti*, which is the conscious aspect of the world, is superior to *aparā prakṛti*, which is the insentient and inert material aspect, as *parā prakṛti* is a fragment of the Supreme Being, or *Puruṣa*. *Parā* is synonymous with the word *jīva*, or the individual souls of living beings. In Vedic thought, these are eternal and, in their manipulation of matter (*aparā*), sustain the universe.⁵⁰ The list of the eight elements, that constitute *aparā prakṛti* in the manual (earth, water, wind, fire, space, mind, intelligence and false-ego), is identical to the list in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.4). However, the words *Puruṣa* and *jīva* are not mentioned with regards to *parā prakṛti*. It is unclear whether the manual uses these terms with the same connotations.

During the Ayutthaya period, Wat Pradusongtham was a centre of learning, not only of Buddhism, Pāli texts and *borān kammaṭṭhāna*, but also of mathematics, linguistics, war strategy, astrology, traditional medicine and the Vedas.⁵¹ The usage of these Sanskrit terms may be a reference to Vedic-related knowledge and practices that were once taught at Wat Pradusongtham. This manual may be instructing the meditator to remove not only the *nimittas* of negative physical and mental states, but also the concepts that were previously taught with regards to such knowledge and practices.⁵²

After dispelling negative mental and material states, the section ends with the meditator contemplating his/her Dhamma body (*dhammakāya*) and descriptions of calm/tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) meditation:

Set the mind to examine *dhammakāya* [Dhamma body] in *rūpakāya* [physical body] by proceeding in the seven factors of enlightenment [*bojjhaṅga*], until the mind realizes and penetrates *rūpa-dhamma* and *nāma-dhamma*. Then, one has self as refuge, has *dhamma* as refuge in this way.⁵³

Samatha is like building a dwelling: building the five aggregates with true knowledge. *Vipassanā* is like a wise builder who deconstructs the building without damaging it, that is, the *arahant* destroying the five aggregates [*khandha*] by cutting-off clinging with wisdom. (Yasothonrat 1935: 269)

warrior-prince, and his charioteer, Krishna, who is regarded as one of the incarnations of the god Vishnu.

⁵⁰*Bhagavad-gītā* (7.4-5): *bhūmir āpo 'nalo vayuḥ khaṇī mano buddhir eva ca ahaṅkāra itīyāṁ me bhīnnaḥ prakrtir aśṭadhā apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parāṁ jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat*

‘Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego — all together these eight constitute My separated material energies. Besides these, O might-armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the living entities who are exploiting the resources or this material, inferior nature’ (Bhaktivedanta 1972).

⁵¹ See, for example, Wat Pradusongtham (2012) and Choompolpaisal (forthcoming).

⁵² Another reason for their usage may be an attempt by the author to Indianise the manual. As it claims to be derived from ancient Indic practices, the author of the manual may have inserted these terms to give an Indian flavour to it.

⁵³ ตั้งจิตต์พิจารณาดูอุรุமากย์ในรูปการเดินทางการดำเนินในโพษสงค์คั่ง ๙ ประการ จนจิตต์รู้แจ้งทางตลาดในรูปชื่อรุ่มและนามชื่อรุ่มได้แล้ว จักมีต้นเป็นที่พึ่ง จักมีธรรมเป็นที่พึ่ง ด้วยประการนี้.

The brief explanation of *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation here suggests that the author of the manual intended to incorporate both calm and insight practices into the meditation method. According to Luang Pho Wira, the word *dhammakāya* refers to the vision of the meditator's inner *deva* (celestial) body (Sithisangwon 2020).⁵⁴ He explains that in Kammathan Matchima Baep Lamdap, when the mind reaches access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*),⁵⁵ the meditator's inner *deva* body, or the body that is within the mind of the meditator, manifests from within and appears like the meditator sitting in meditation, but much more refined (Sithisangwon 2020). The first vision of the meditator's inner body is gained in the third stage of Kammathan Matchima Baep Lamdap, in which bodily and mental happiness are achieved, and from this stage, more inner bodies are seen up to the highest level, the path of the *arahant* (Sithisangwon 2020). As the meditator progresses to higher stages, he/she will see more refined inner bodies, one of which is called *dhammakāya*. Each of the inner bodies appears differently depending on the purity of the meditator's mind (Sithisangwon 2020).

The mention of *dhammakāya* in the manual seems to be a reference to a similar vision of the meditator's inner celestial body as described by Luang Pho Wira, for towards the end of the qualities of the Dhamma section, it mentions attainment of 'a luminescent and inconceivable *deva* form':

The one whose mind consists of *saṃādhi*, does not consist of restlessness, and proceeding through each level with his/her mental-stream, will attain the *deva* state that is very pure; the knowledge that knows all [*sabbaññuta-ñāna*]; clearly sees; knows the end of the world; lasting; is the controller and the most refined of all refined things. Because it [the mind] has a form [*rūpa*] that is inconceivable [*acinteyya*], luminescent and clear, floating above darkness that is ignorance. (Yasothonrat 1935: 277)⁵⁶

The usage of the term *dhammakāya*, to describe similar visions of the meditator's inner body, is also present in other meditation systems. The best known among these are the *borān kammaṭṭhāna*-influenced meditation systems of: 1) Sammā Araham, as developed by Luang Pho Sot Candasaro, Wat Paknam, Thonburi; and 2) Manomayiddhi, as developed by Phra Ratchaphromyan (Wira Ṭhāvaro) or Luang Pho Ruesi Lingdam (1916-1992), Wat Thasung, Uthai Thani. Both systems incorporate an understanding of *dhammakāya* as the supramundane and supraphysical inner body of the meditator, which appears like a translucent Buddha image sitting in meditation, and is achieved at the attainment of the noble paths (*ariya-magga*) and fruits (*ariya-phala*).⁵⁷

⁵⁴ กายทิพย์.

⁵⁵ Access concentration is a state of *saṃādhi* that is approaching, but not yet reaching, attainment concentration (*appanā-saṃādhi*), i.e. the state of mental absorption (*jhāna*).

⁵⁶ ผู้มีใจประกอบด้วยสماธิ ไม่ประคบคอบด้วยใจปุ่งสร้าง ดำเนินกระแคลจ์เต็มลำตัว จิตเต็มอ้อมบุรลุสภាយอัน เป็นพิพย์ที่บริสุทธิ์อย่างยิ่ง ล้วนเป็นส่วนสัพพัญญูตญาณ เทีบั้ดด หยั่งทราบที่สุสิโภ ยั่งยืน เป็นผู้บังคับ และ ละเวียบเที่ยสุดแต่บรรดาสิ่งที่ลักษณะเดียวกัน เพราจะมีสูงเป็นอัจฉิตร รุ่งเรืองสุกใส ลอยเดนอยู่หนีความมีด คือ วิชชา ฯ.

⁵⁷ For further discussions of both meditation systems, see the author's PhD thesis (Cholvijarn 2019), which

Another different usage of the term *dhammakāya* in *borān kammaṭṭhāna* is found in the ‘*dhammakāya* verses’,⁵⁸ whose earliest record is the Pāli inscription, dated 1549, found inside the *cetiya* of Wat Suea, Phitsanulok province. The *dhammakāya* verses are paracanonical Pāli verses that equate parts of the Buddha’s body and robes with his different qualities and attainments.⁵⁹ It is used as a chanting text and a meditation exercise, and is recited in Buddha image consecration ceremonies. The text was brought to the attention of Western scholars by George Cœdès, who discovered it at Wat Unalom, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in 1956.⁶⁰ Since then, different versions of the text have been located at various temples in Thailand and Cambodia, such as Wat Phra Chetuphon (Wat Pho), Bangkok; Wachirayan National Library, Bangkok; Wat Pasak Noi, Chiang Mai; Wat Pa Mueat, Nan; Wat Chetpon, Kampong Cham; and Wat Chong Thnol, Phnom Penh.⁶¹

The diagrams of the qualities of the Dhamma and Saṅgha

Crosby (2019: 129-146), in her survey and analysis of 18th century Sri Lankan *borān kammaṭṭhāna* manuscripts held at the British Library, has convincingly suggested that the rationale behind *borān kammaṭṭhāna*’s path and its interpretation of *nimittas* correspond with Theravāda Abhidhamma’s understanding of consciousness and causality.⁶² She argues that *borān kammaṭṭhāna*’s practice of moving states of consciousness (*citta*) and its associated mental factors (*cetasika*), in and around the body, is rooted in South Asian’s model of consciousness, in particular, Abhidhamma’s understanding of consciousness as ‘mobile’ and ‘composite’ (Crosby 2019: 142-143). Theravāda Abhidhamma posits four categories of ultimate realities (*paramattha-dhamma*): form (*rūpa*), consciousness (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasika*) and *nibbāna*.⁶³ The first three categories are regarded as impermanent and momentary. In the case of consciousness, it is described as arising and ceasing in quick succession, constantly moving in and out of the body to catch different sense objects during the process of perception and cognition. Furthermore, for a consciousness to arise, there must be at least seven accompanying mental factors.

traces the origins of Sammā Araham (Dhammakāya) meditation. The thesis analyses Luang Pho Sot’s autobiography, his sermons, the teachings of two of Luang Pho Sot’s meditation teachers, and the meditation methods of Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean and Wat Pradusongtham. It also seeks to clarify further the relationship of Luang Pho Sot’s Sammā Araham meditation to the *borān kammaṭṭhāna* tradition.

⁵⁸ Also known as *Phra/Brah Dhammakāyādi* and *Dhammakāyānussati-kathā*.

⁵⁹ For example, the head of the *dhammakāya* is identified as equivalent to the Buddha’s omniscience, the hair as equivalent to *nibbāna*, the forehead as equivalent to the *jhānas* and hair between the brows (*unalom*) as equivalent to the ‘great diamond treasure attainment’ (*mahāvajirasamāpatti*), etc. For a translation of the text, see Malasart (forthcoming).

⁶⁰ See Cœdès (1956).

⁶¹ See Bizot (1992); Swearer (2004); Urkasame (2013); Walker (2018); and Malasart (forthcoming).

⁶² Abhidhamma refers to the teachings set forth in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, the third division of the Pāli canon, which consist of treatises of technical systemisation of Theravāda doctrines.

⁶³ These are summarised, for example, in the first chapter of the 12th century Pāli manual, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (*Compendium of things contained in the Abhidhamma*), composed by the Sri Lankan monk, Anuruddha (see Bodhi et al. 1993: 25-73).

These mental factors determine the nature of the consciousness, whether it is wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*), and in turn, determine the nature of an action whether it supports or hinders the path to enlightenment.⁶⁴ The manipulation of *nimittas* in *borān kammaṭṭhāna* reflect this understanding of consciousness. The *nimittas*, which are attainments of wholesome mental states, are moved in combination with *nimittas* of other wholesome mental states. As the meditator progresses along the path, different sets of combinations of *nimittas*, representing more refined wholesome mental states, are invoked at each level to replace the previous sets. According to Crosby (2019: 133), this practice of gradually abandoning a set of mental states and substituting them with more and more refined and wholesome sets, that culminates in the attainment of the paths (*magga*) and fruits (*phalas*) of the noble ones (*ariya*), corresponds to Abhidhamma's causality.

One can see a similar process at work in the qualities diagrams of the Dhamma and Saṅgha: a combination of wholesome mental states being invoked and then replaced by another combination of wholesome mental states, as the meditator builds up more and more refined mental states, that eventually lead him/her to the attainment of *nibbāna*. Having invoked the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) in the Buddha's qualities diagram, the Dhamma's qualities diagram instruct the meditator to 'set' the seven purifications (*visuddhi*) at the seven bodily bases, thus invoking a different set of wholesome mental states (Yasothonrat 1935: 276).⁶⁵ The meditator visualises the Dhamma's qualities diagram twice: firstly, row by row, and secondly, in numerical order, while reciting the Dhamma section of the *Iti Pi So Ratanamālā*. The '*lokuttaram cittam jhānam*' sphere is again achieved prior to the meditator using it to dispel all the *nimittas* of negative physical and mental states. The diagram of the Saṅgha's qualities begins with the meditator invoking another set of wholesome mental states, namely, the nine insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) at the nine bodily bases.⁶⁶ The visualisations are also accompanied by the recitation of the Saṅgha section of *Iti Pi So Ratanamālā*. The manual ends with the meditator's contemplation of his/her *dhammakāya*.

⁶⁴ For a summary of the mental factors, see the second chapter of *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (Bodhi et al. 1993: 76-113).

⁶⁵ Both the seven factors of enlightenment and the seven purifications are mentioned in the seventh and ninth chapters of *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, respectively (Bodhi et al. 1993: 281 and 344-355). The seven purifications consist of: 1) purification of virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*); 2) purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*); 3) purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*); 4) purification by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkā-vitaraṇa-visuddhi*); 5) purification of knowledge and vision of what is path and not path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*); 6) purification of knowledge and vision of way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*); and 7) purification by knowledge and insight (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*). This structure is based on seven stages of purifications described in the *Rathavīnīta Sutta* (M I 145) and is also laid out in Upatissa's *Vimuttimagga* (*Path of Freedom*) and Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* as a progressive path that leads to the attainment of *nibbāna*.

⁶⁶ The nine insight knowledges (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) are mentioned in the ninth chapter of *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* under the sixth purification and consist of: 1) knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*); 2) knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanā-ñāṇa*); 3) knowledge of the fearful (*bhayatūpaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*); 4) knowledge of danger (*ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa*); 5) knowledge of dispassion (*nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa*); 6) knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muccitu-kamyatā-ñāṇa*); 7) knowledge of reflective contemplation (*patisaṅkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*); 8) knowledge of equanimity towards formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*); and 9) conformity knowledge (*anuloma-ñāṇa*) (Bodhi et al. 1993: 352-354). They describe the experiences the meditator encounters during the progress of insight (*vipassanā*) meditation (see also Vism. XXI).

Conclusion

This article aimed at facilitating a better understanding not only of the *borān kammaṭṭhāna* tradition's common characteristics, but also of its internal differentiations: the sophistication, the variety of practices, lineages and sources that the whole tradition encompassed. The manual discussed in this article is no longer studied and practised, and its meditative exercises, abbreviated passages, and obscure notions are understood by only a handful of living practitioners and scholars. This article is thus intended to contribute to the preservation of *borān kammaṭṭhāna* before all its living lineages completely disappear, as well as to affirm the interconnectedness of premodern Theravāda meditation and various other 'sciences' available at the time.⁶⁷ These sciences, whose knowledge and practices are dismissed, relegated and confined to the realms of 'apotropaic rituals', 'magic' and 'superstition' by today's meditation teachers and practitioners, were incorporated as part of the path to enlightenment, practised and taught at one of the most influential temples of Ayutthaya.

Future research into the remainder of the Wat Pradusongtham collection and the history of the lineage will further reveal its relationships to other *borān kammaṭṭhāna* methods, such as those preserved in the manuals of King Taksin, Supreme Patriarch Suk and Supreme Patriarch Don, and the details of how this lineage has been marginalised and in decline since the Ayutthaya period.

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⁶⁷ For further discussions regarding the 'sciences' and 'technologies' that informed *borān kammaṭṭhāna*, see Crosby (2013).

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