Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean's Method of Visualizing the Elements

Potprecha Cholvijarn, Chulalongkorn University

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Abstract: *The paper aims to shed further light on the* boran kammaṭṭhāna*, or "old meditation," tradition by providing a summary and an analysis of a meditation manual titled "Baep Doen That" (literally, "Model for walking the elements") attributed to the Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean (1733–1822), the fourth Saṅgharāja of Bangkok, Thailand. It is a manual for advanced practitioners that consists of visualizations of the six elements (earth, water, wind, fire, space, and consciousness), plus* citta *(mind), represented by sacred Pāli syllables in eight verses, in order to achieve the eight supernormal knowledges and powers (*vijjās*). The eight verses, each verse aimed at developing one of the powers, are taken from the well-known* Iti Pi So *Eight Directions protective chant (*paritta*), a variation of the canonical* Iti Pi So Bhagavā *(Thus is the Blessed One) formula. The analysis of the manual incorporates the author's interviews with Phra Khru Sitthisangwon (Wira Ṭhanāvīro) of Wat Ratchasittharam, the current lineage holder of Supreme Patriarch Suk's meditation.*

INTRODUCTION

Supreme Patriarch Suk Kai Thuean (1733–1822), or Somdet Suk, is one of the towering figures in the burgeoning field of *boran kammaṭṭhāna* (Thai: *kammathan baep boran*), the premodern esoteric Theravāda meditation tradition. Prior to the 19th-century monastic reform, his lineage was the dominant form of meditation in Bangkok, practiced by kings, heads of the *saṅghas*, and other monastic and lay elites. Born in Ayutthaya during the reign of King Borommakot (1733–1758), Somdet Suk was ordained at Wat Pradusongtham and studied meditation there and at Wat Tha Hoi. He also studied with the renowned meditation master Somdet Phra Phonrat Kaew at Wat Pa Kaew (present-day Wat Yai Chaimonkhon). The latter was the center of meditation practice of Ayutthaya and the residence of the supreme patriarch of the forest-dwelling order of the *saṅgha*. Somdet Suk was the abbot of Wat Tha Hoi when the Burmese (Myanmar) army sacked Ayutthaya in 1767 and remained there during the Thonburi period (1767–1782). After founding Bangkok, King Rama I (r. 1782–1809), who was a meditation student of Somdet Suk, invited him to reside at Wat Plub, Thonburi, and appointed him the head of meditation of the new capital. Wat Plub merged with a nearby temple, Wat Ratchasittharam, during the reign of King Rama III (r. 1824–1851) and has been known as Wat Ratchasittharam ever since. Apart from King Rama I, Somdet Suk also taught meditation to kings Rama II (r. 1809–1824), Rama III, and Rama IV (r. 1851–1868), as well as the influential Somdet Phra Phutthachan (To Brahmaraṅsī) of Wat Rakhang

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(1788–1872). He became supreme patriarch in 1820 during the reign of King Rama II. One of his responsibilities as head of the *saṅgha* was to lead the council that conducted the purification of meditation practice in 1821.[1]

Figure 1: A wax figure of Somdet Suk at the Meditation Museum of Wat Ratchasittharam

Somdet Suk was not only known to have attained the fruit of the non-returner (*anāgāmī*) during his lifetime, but also he was recognized as an adept in supernormal powers. According to his biography, he was able to communicate with *devas* (gods), receive teachings from meditation masters of former times, and read the minds of others.[2] Once a Cham merchant was passing Wat Tha Hoi on a boat loaded with coconut sugar. Somdet Suk, who was standing near the riverbank, greeted him and inquired about the goods on his boat. Not wanting to share the sugar, the merchant told Somdet Suk that it was salt. After arriving home, to his surprise, all the sugar in his boat had turned into salt. The merchant told the villagers about the incident, and was informed that he must return to Wat Tha Hoi and apologize to Somdet Suk. Having begged Somdet Suk for forgiveness, he went home to discover that the salt in his boat had turned back into sugar. Somdet Suk was also known for his kindness to animals. To save wild chickens from being hunted, he tamed them with his loving-kindness and brought them into Wat Plub. Being constantly surrounded by them, he became known as Suk "Kai Thuean" or Suk "Wild Chickens."

A large collection of meditation and healing texts attributed to Somdet Suk survives to the present day, firstly as *samut khoi* (folding manuscripts) in the meditation museum in section five of Wat Ratchasittharam, where the living lineage of Somdet Suk's meditation, the Matchima Baep Lamdap system, is still practiced and taught. Secondly, there are two publications of the early 20th century, one compiled and edited by Chai Yasothonrat, a monk at Wat Baromniwat, Bangkok, and the other published in 1935 by Luang Wisan Darunkon (An Sarikbut) (1884–1950) as a cremation volume dedicated to his mother.

The manual concerned is found in both Chai Yasothonrat's and Luang Wisan Darunkon's publications, but only in Luang Wisan's publication is it acknowledged as belonging to the lineage of Somdet Suk.[3] Luang Wisan was an astrologer; teacher; meditation pupil of the abbot of Wat Ratchasittharam, Phra Sangkharanuwong (Chum) (1853–1927); and uncle of a well-known astrologer, Thep Sarikbut (1919–1993). In the preface, Luang Wisan states that he obtained two *samut khois* from Phra Sangkharanuwong, who informed him that they were very old and date back to the time of Somdet Suk.[4]

The two manuscripts given to Luang Wisan consisted of four texts:

1. "Phra Samatha-Vipassanā"
2. "Baep Doen That" ("Model for walking the elements")
3. "Daily Chant"
4. "Invitation (*ārādhanā*) of Meditation Subjects"

The first text, Phra Samatha-Vipassanā, also found in Chai Yasothonrat's publication, has been discussed by several scholars, notably Mettanando Bhikkhu (Mano Laohavanich), Olivier de Bernon, and Phibul Choompolpaisal. Somdet Suk's living meditation lineage, the Matchima Baep Lamdap system, has also been discussed by Andrew Skilton, Kate Crosby, Phibul Choompolpaisal, and Patrick Ong.[5]

Baep Doen That, on the other hand, has never been referred to in any Thai or Western academic research. This is most likely because in the Chai Yasothonrat publication, which is more studied of the two, Chai Yasothonrat grouped all the manuals concerning the visualization of the elements together without mentioning their sources. I came across this manual in the Chai Yasothonrat publication and read it several times, but as its author was unknown, I was not able to date and contextualize it. After finding the same manual in Wat Ratchasittharam's 1968 reprint of Luang Wisan Darunkon's publication, I went to Wat Ratchasittharam to verify Luang Wisan's account. Luang Pho Wira Thānavīro (Phra Khru Sitthisangwon) (1949–), the current lineage holder of Somdet Suk's Matchima Baep Lamdap system, confirmed that the original manuscript of this manual dates from the time of Somdet Suk.[6] He added that it is unknown who developed this meditation method. Somdet Suk was not the innovator, but inherited it from the lineage of Somdet Phra Phonrat of Wat Pa Kaew, Ayutthaya. It was not part of the Matchima Baep Lamdap system, but a separate method that Somdet Suk taught to selected advanced students who had reached the fourth *jhāna* (mental absorption).[7] It was practiced and taught at Wat Ratchasittharam until the tenure of the abbot Phra Sangkharanuwong (Chum) (1915–1927), to whom the folding manuscript belonged, when it was discontinued due to a lack of qualified students.[8]

Among the surviving *boran kammaṭṭhāna* texts and living lineages, this manual is particularly significant because it provides instructions for the development of not only one but all eight

supernormal knowledges and powers (*vijjās*), and sheds light on how *boran kammaṭṭhāna* views the relationship between *samatha* (calm) and *vipassanā* (insight) meditation. I made five more visits to Wat Ratchasittharam to interview Luang Pho Wira Thānavīro. He was initially reluctant to share any information about this manual, as it is reserved for advanced practitioners. During my second visit, I managed to convince him that it would benefit the lineage of Somdet Suk if international scholars of Buddhist Studies and general readers were made aware of this important and unique meditation method. After giving it some thought, Luang Pho Wira consented to let me interview him, giving a little more information each visit. At the end of the fifth interview, he congratulated me for having finally figured out and understood this difficult manual, and gave me his blessings to talk and write about it.

The fact that this manual is no longer practiced at Wat Ratchasittharam comes as no surprise. *Boran kammaṭṭhāna* was one of the most popular meditation traditions of the Theravāda world, with evidence found in present-day Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. The tradition can be traced as far back as the 16th century, whereas all contemporary meditation traditions in Theravāda countries can be traced back to no earlier than the late 19th-century reforms and revivals.[9] In 1756, a lineage of *boran kammaṭṭhāna* from Ayutthaya was sent to Kandy as part of a mission to revive Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Since the 19th-century reforms, however, the tradition has been rapidly declining and in various regions is on the verge of extinction. This is because some of its practices have been marginalized and suppressed and because the perception of what constitutes Theravāda meditation is changing. An aspect of *boran kammaṭṭhāna*, for example, seeks to harness the power of Pāli, a language believed to have been spoken by the Buddha and one in which his teachings are preserved. In this tradition, Pāli is viewed as having a creative potency, and its syllables can be employed in apotropaic rituals; can represent concepts, attainments, teachings, and qualities; and can be objects of visualization to achieve both mundane (*lokiya*) and supra-mundane (*lokuttara*) goals.[10] The mundane goal includes healing, protection, and the supernormal powers. In this manual, a rearrangement of a canonical protective chant (*paritta*) is selected for its potency and its syllables used to represent meditation subjects—namely, six elements (*dhātus*) and *citta* (mind)—and to serve as objects of visualization.

Another related aspect of the tradition is the complex visionary experiences that occur in meditation. *Boran kammaṭṭhāna* employs a sophisticated system of movements and interactions of image manifestation (*nimittas*) in and around the meditator's body, which are usually experienced as luminous light spheres of various colors and are sometimes accompanied by Pāli syllables.[11] In Somdet Suk's Matchima Baep Lamdap system, for example, the first stage begins with the meditator experiencing five kinds of joys (*pīti*) both as bodily sensations and as light spheres. The light spheres are, then, moved around the body to the different bodily bases between the nostril and the navel in specific patterns and sequences. As the meditator progresses to higher stages, they obtain much more elaborate visions associated with the attainment of divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), such as those of their inner spiritual bodies and of other realms of the cosmos and their inhabitants.

These and other aspects of *boran kammaṭṭhāna* are labeled unorthodox by Theravāda reformists who attempted to align Buddhist practice with science and rationalism. Meditation became increasingly viewed as mind science, confined to the domain of the mind, and practices

that are deemed somatic or related to the magical and supernormal were no longer part of it. The meditation revival of the late 19th and 20th centuries thus emphasized the newly introduced "dry insight" *vipassanā* tradition from Burma (Myanmar), which downplayed or disregarded the practice of *samatha*, an aspect of Buddhist meditation related to *jhānas* and supernormal powers.[12] These factors have caused many *boran kammaṭṭhāna* lineages to die out.

Another reason this manual is no longer practiced may be because it is very esoteric. It is written in the style of a memory aid of a pupil summarizing his teacher's instruction. Some passages in the manual are minimalistic and terse. Luang Pho Wira states that when someone writes a manual of this level, he tends to hide most of its meaning, making it ambiguous so it can only be practiced individually and under the supervision of a qualified meditation teacher.[13]

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF "BAEP DOEN THAT"

For the following summary and analysis, I am using Wat Ratchasittharam's 1968 reprint of Luang Wisan Darunkon's 1935 cremation volume. Where further elaboration and interpretation are required, I have incorporated the understanding of Luang Pho Wira, which is given in separate paragraphs and accompanied by endnotes. Although Luang Pho Wira was never taught this particular method, his extensive knowledge and practice of the Matchima Baep Lamdap system of Somdet Suk gives him an advantage in interpreting the ambiguous passages of the text. The manuscript does not have a title, but the first sentence reads: "Baep Doen That [model for walking the elements], the master explains in the original that [this method] leads to the attainment of various supernormal powers." Luang Wisan, in his publication, named it "Baep Doen That" after this passage.[14]

The instruction describes the practice of visualization of seven objects: 1) earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*), 2) water element (*āpo-dhātu*), 3) fire element (*tejo-dhātu*), 4) wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*), 5) space element (*ākāsa-dhātu*), 6) consciousness element (*viññāṇa-dhātu*), and 7) mind (*citta*). The list of the six elements, minus *citta*, is canonical and can be found in a number of important discourses (*suttas*) of the Buddha such as the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* (Analysis of the Elements Discourse) (M iii 237), where they are enumerated, explained, and shown to be not-self (*anattā*).[15]

The earth element is what is solid in the physical world both internally and externally. Water refers to what is liquid, fire refers to heat, and wind refers to the movement of air. Space refers to holes and passages within the body and external space. The consciousness element is what cognizes physical and mental objects that come into contact with the sense doors and the mind. The well-known *Saṅgīti Sutta* (Reciting Together Discourse) (D iii 207) provides a list of doctrines arranged in numerical sequence. The six elements are listed under the doctrine of sixes.[16] The addition of *citta* to this list, however, appears to be unique to this manual, as the list of seven is not found anywhere in the Pāli Canon, the commentaries, the sub-commentaries, or the *boran kammaṭṭhāna* texts I have examined.

When asked why *citta* is added to the list of six elements, Luang Pho Wira explains that consciousness element refers to the "knowing element," that aspect of the mind that cognizes an object. *Citta* means the entire mind of the practitioner that resides at the heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*). In the Matchima Baep Lamdap system, this base is located in the middle of the chest. But

since consciousness element is already being visualized, *citta* here may refer to all other aspects of the mind except the "knowing element."[17]

These seven objects are represented by sacred Pāli syllables in eight verses. Each verse or "model" (*baep*, as the manual terms it) is aimed at developing one of the eight supernormal knowledges and powers. The verses are taken from the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions (*Iti Pi So Paet Thit*) protective chant, which is a rearrangement of the qualities of the Buddha (*Buddha-guṇa*) section of the canonical *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* (Thus is the Blessed One) formula.[18] The manual takes the seven syllables from each verse of the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions and assigns them the six elements and *citta* so that all the syllables of the entire protective chant have their corresponding objects.

The eight powers, enumerated below, are a part of the canonical list of attainments that are attributed to the practitioners of meditation who have reached the fourth *jhāna*. In the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (Fruits of the Ascetic Life Discourse) (D i 47), they are explained after a lengthy description of the four *jhānas*. Insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and knowledge of the destruction of influxes (*āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa*) are the results of *vipassanā* or the practice of insight, whereas the rest are the result of *samatha*, or calm meditation.

1. Insight knowledge
2. Mind-made power (*manomayiddhi*)
3. Supernormal powers (*iddhi-vidhā*)
4. Divine ear (*dibba-sota*)
5. Mind reading (*ceto-pariya-ñāṇa*)
6. Recollection of past lives (*pubbe-nivāsānussati-ñāṇa*)
7. Divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*)
8. Knowledge of the destruction of influxes

Mind-made power refers to the ability to manifest mind-made bodies of oneself, and supernormal powers are magical abilities such as multiplying oneself, disappearing, going through walls, flying, walking on water, and so on. As shall be elaborated below, divine eye, the ability to see beyond what the ordinary human can, is one of the most important attainments, and is developed twice in this manual, initially in the first model as a prerequisite for insight knowledge, and more fully, on its own, in the seventh model.

Another important attainment is insight knowledge, which, according to Luang Pho Wira, is not only developed in the first model but also continuously practiced along with other attainments so that the practitioner does not get attached to them.[19] The constant development of insight culminates in the complete eradication of all the influxes (*āsavas*) in the eighth model and marks the attainment of arhatship and *nibbāna*.

The first set of visualizations is titled "model for developing divine eye" and consists of seven syllables of the first verse of the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant—their corresponding six elements and *citta*—and the orders in which they are to be visualized. I have left the word *citta* untranslated here as this term, according to Luang Pho Wira, does not refer to the entire mind of the practitioner, but all its aspects except consciousness.[20]

1. Model for developing divine eye:

I	*Ra*	*Jā*	*Ga*	*Ta*	*Ra*	*Sā*	
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire	
1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

The syllables are written in the manual in Thai, but, according to Luang Pho Wira, they are usually visualized in Khom script.[21] The practitioner would write out the Khom on a piece of a paper, place it in front of them, and then recite and visualize the syllables following the numbers written below first in forward order (*anuloma*), then in reverse order (*paṭiloma*). This is to be done while simultaneously performing mindfulness of breath (*ānāpānasati*).[22]

The order of the syllables is called *khao sap* (shuffle order), one of many different types of arrangements used in *boran kammaṭṭhāna*. Instead of a straightforward left to right, *khao sap* rearranges the order so that the first two syllables start from the farthest left and farthest right; the third and fourth, the second from left and right; the fifth and sixth, the third from left and right; and the seventh in the middle. In *khao sap* reverse order, the syllables start from the middle and work their way outward, ending with the farthest right.[23]

The forward order is thus visualized as follows: 1) *I* (water element), 2) *Sā* (fire element), 3) *Ra* (earth element), 4) *Ra* (wind element), 5) *Jā* (space element), 6) *Ta* (consciousness element), and 7) *Ga* (*citta*). The reverse order is visualized as follows: 1) *Ga* (*citta*), 2) *Jā* (space element), 3) *Ta* (consciousness element), 4) *Ra* (earth element), 5) *Ra* (wind element), 6) *I* (water element), and 7) *Sā* (fire element). This is why the manual is titled "Model for walking the elements." The word "walking" here refers to the practice of visualizing the elements one by one, not to the physical act of ambulation.

After the meditator has visualized the first model back and forth for a long period of time, the manual gives the following instructions:

> Take out the syllable "*Ga*" and visualize it until [the mind is] calm and then destroy it. Then, visualize and destroy the six elements until they are completely gone. The acquired image [*uggaha-nimitta*] and counterimage [*paṭibhāga-nimitta*] will appear. When one has examined and contemplated their characteristic [*lakkhaṇa*], function [*rasa*], manifestation [*paccupaṭṭhāṇa*] and proximate cause [*padaṭṭṭhāṇa*] thoroughly until one has mastered it,

> destroy them and this shall open up and brighten the world. The sphere of divine eye will arise. When the *citta* passes this stage, move on to insight knowledge in the next stage.[24]

No further explanation is given in the manual. The following is Luang Pho Wira's interpretation and my analysis of this passage.

The syllable *Ga* is regarded as the representative form of the practitioner's *citta*. To destroy it along with the six elements, according to Luang Pho Wira, means "to use the mind to erase all the *nimittas* [image manifestations] of the Khom syllables."[25] Once these image manifestations are erased, the visions of acquired image and counterimage will appear as luminous spheres in front of the meditator.

An acquired image is a mental or eidetic image of the object of visualization that the meditator is able to see clearly with or without closing their eyes when a certain degree of concentration (*samādhi*) is developed. A counterimage is a much clearer and purer image of the original object of visualization when access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), a level of concentration that approaches mental absorption (*jhāna*), is reached.[26]

The practitioner then contemplates the characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause of the image manifestation, what they represent (six elements and *citta*), and other accompanying mental states. These four terms, which are given in the manual in Pāli without any explanation, are found in the Pāli commentaries and refer to the fourfold method of analyzing *dhammas*, the most basic mental and physical states that the practitioner experiences in meditation.[27] The characteristic of a *dhamma* is its most important quality, its function is its specific task and goal, its manifestation is how the *dhamma* is experienced in meditation, and its proximate cause is the condition that the *dhamma* depends on to arise. For example, if the meditator's mind is accompanied by one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), they would contemplate it as having the characteristic of not distracted, the function of uniting related mental states, the manifestation of peace, and the proximate cause of joy. *Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*), the influential fifth-century treatise outlining the entire Theravāda path to enlightenment, incorporates this fourfold method into its development of insight. In chapter 18 (Vsm 587–597), the *Purification of View* (*Diṭṭhi-visudhi*), which is the third of seven stages of purifications, the abandonment of all distortions and wrong views is achieved by gaining an analytical knowledge of all physical and mental *dhammas* according to this fourfold method.

After analyzing these *dhammas*, the practitioner is to erase the image manifestation for the final time. Luang Pho Wira explains that this is when the meditator applies the three characteristics of impermanence (*annicaṃ*), suffering (*dukkhaṃ*), and not-self to the image manifestation, the objects they represent, and accompanying mental states. The actual vision of the meditator's *citta* that has attained divine eye will appear as a luminous sphere. The meditator then uses their divine eye to develop insight knowledge.[28]

Although the text states that the first model is aimed at developing divine eye, Luang Pho Wira explains that the goal of this model is actually the attainment of insight knowledge, the first of the eight powers. In the Matchima Baep Lamdap system, both the fourth *jhāna* and the divine eye are prerequisites for the development of insight. The seeing of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*) of the practitioner is essential for achieving deep insight into conditioned realities, and *vipassanā* prior to the attainment of *jhānas* is not encouraged in this system. Once insight knowledge is attained,

it is applied to all the remaining models so that the practitioner does not get attached to their supernormal powers and lose sight of having *nibbāna* as the ultimate goal.[29]

This view is in marked contrast to the views of today's most popular meditation traditions, in particular Burmese *vipassanā* or "dry insight." Founded by monks Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923) and Mingun Sayadaw (1870–1955) in the late 19th century, the two main lineages became bases for the internationalization of insight meditation and its spread to the West.[30] Their meditation techniques emphasize *vipassanā* over *samatha*, employ the basic momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*) almost exclusively, and dispense with access concentration and attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), the latter being the concentration level that exists during the state of *jhāna*. The practitioners of dry insight are not supposed to recite any mantras, visualize any object, or arrive at any visionary experience. They see *jhānas* as a pre-Buddhist practice and unnecessary for the attainment of *nibbāna*. The development of worldly powers that are the result of *jhānas* is also not encouraged in the dry insight tradition.

For the second to eighth models of Baep Doen That, the seven verses and their corresponding elements and orders are provided. The text only states that they are to be practiced like the first model. For example, in the second model, the practitioner makes a resolve to attain *manomayiddhi* or mind-made power—and, after visualizing the syllables back and forth, takes the syllable *To* to visualize before destroying it. The light sphere image manifestation to be seen at the conclusion of all models are clearly indicated as small circles in the manual.

2. Model for developing mind-made power:

Ti	*Haṃ*	*Ca*	*To*	*Ro*	*Thi*	*Naṃ*	
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire	
1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

3. Model for developing supernormal power:

Pi	*Sam*	*Ra*	*Lo*	*Pu*	*Sat*	*Budh*	
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire	
1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

4. Model for developing divine ear:

So	*Mā*	*Ṇa*	*Ka*	*Ri*	*Thā*	*Dho*
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire

1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

5. Model for developing mind reading:

Bha	*Sam*	*Sam*	*Vi*	*Sa*	*De*	*Bha*	
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire	
1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

6. Model for developing recollection of past lives:

Ga	*Bud*	*Pan*	*Dū*	*Dham*	*Va*	*Ga*	
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire	
1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

7. Model for developing divine eye:

Vā	*Dho*	*No*	*A*	*Ma*	*Ma*	*Vā*	
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire	
1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

8. Model for developing knowledge of the destruction of influxes:

A	*Vij*	*Su*	*Nut*	*Sā*	*Nus*	*Ti*	
Water	Earth	Space	*Citta*	Consciousness	Wind	Fire	
1	3	5	7	6	4	2	(*Anuloma*)
6	4	2	1	3	5	7	(*Paṭiloma*)

After providing the guidelines for developing all eight powers, the manual ends with a warning that the practitioner should not attempt to practice it without a qualified teacher.[31]

Having presented a summary and analysis of the manual, the following sections offer discussions on two topics: firstly, the meaning, usage, and significance of the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant, and, secondly, the various possible sources of the method.

ITI PI SO EIGHT DIRECTIONS PROTECTIVE CHANT

The view of Pāli as a sacred language can be found in the Pāli commentaries. According to Buddhaghosa, fifth-century commentator and author of the *Path of Purification*, Pāli is the root language (*mūlabhāsā*) of all beings, spoken by the Buddha, the enlightened disciples, and all inhabitants of the cosmos.[32] This understanding of Pāli informs the practice of protective chant or verses of both canonical and noncanonical origin that are chanted by monastics and laypeople as part of their daily practice to gain protection, auspiciousness, and success in various endeavors. One of the most popular protective chants in Theravāda Buddhism is the *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula (also known as *Dhajagga paritta*), which is found throughout the Pāli Canon and consists of three sections describing the qualities of the Triple Gems (Buddha, *dhamma*, and *saṅgha*). These qualities are said to be constantly recollected by highly attained individuals who possess great faith in them. In the *Dhajagga Sutta* (Top of the Standard Discourse) (S i 218), from which the name of the protective chant is derived, the Buddha advises monks that whenever they go into the forest or an empty dwelling, rather than recollecting the banner of Indra and other gods, they should recite this formula to recollect the Triple Gems and their fears would be dispelled.[33]

In mainland Southeast Asia, there exist a number of variations on this formula. Sometimes the qualities of the Buddha (*Buddha-guṇa*) section is chanted backward from the last syllable to the first syllable. The "heart syllables," which are the syllables that represent various parts of the formula, are sometimes chanted and/or used in protective tattoos and inscribed on images and amulets. It is believed that the power inherent in the words of the Buddha, his qualities described in it, and the sacredness of the Pāli language is released through the chanting, drawing, and inscribing, no matter whether the combinations of syllables make any linguistic sense.

The following is the *Qualities of the Buddha* section of the canonical *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula followed by a translation:

> *Iti pi so bhagavā arahaṃ sammāsaṃbuddho vijjācaraṇasaṃpanno sugato lokavidū anuttarapurisadammasārathī satthā devamanussānaṃ buddho bhagavā ti.*
>
> The Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.[34]

The eight verses in the "Baep Doen That" manual are taken from the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant, which is another variation of the formula. The protective chant takes the *Qualities of the Buddha* section and rearranges it so that it is written from top to bottom, similar to the way Chinese characters are written, but to be chanted from left to right. The first verse of the protective chant thus consists of the 1st (*I*), the 9th (*Ra*), the 17th (*Jā*), the 25th (*Ga*), the 33rd (*Ta*), the 41st (*Ra*), and the 49th (*Sā*) syllables. The second verse consists of the 2nd (*Ti*), the 10th (*Haṃ*), the

18th (*Ca*), the 26th (*To*), the 34th (*Ro*), the 42nd (*Thi*), and the 50th (*Naṃ*) syllables, and so on. The logic behind this rearrangement is that all verses contain every section of the *Qualities of the Buddha* formula without any verse being more important or more central than the others.

I	*Ra*	*Jā*	*Ga*	*Ta*	*Ra*	*Sā*
Ti	*Haṃ*	*Ca*	*To*	*Ro*	*Thi*	*Naṃ*
Pi	*Sam*	*Ra*	*Lo*	*Pu*	*Sat*	*Budh*
So	*Mā*	*Ṇa*	*Ka*	*Ri*	*Thā*	*Dho*
Bha	*Sam*	*Sam*	*Vi*	*Sa*	*De*	*Bha*
Ga	*Bud*	*Pan*	*Dū*	*D[h]am*	*Va*	*Ga*
Vā	*Dho*	*No*	*A*	*Ma*	*Ma*	*Vā*
A	*Vij*	*Su*	*Nut*	*Sā*	*Nus*	*Ti*

Figure 2: *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant

By chanting the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant, it is believed that one would be protected from dangers and calamities coming from all directions. Thep Sarikbut, a well-known Thai astrologer and the nephew of Luang Wisan Darunkon (An Sarikbut), includes this protective chant in his collection of chants, which, since its publication, has become a standard reference for astrologers and practitioners of apotropaic rituals throughout Thailand. Thep Sarikbut explains that the protective chant is often used to make sacred water and earth. The latter is placed in eight directions around one's home to protect it from malevolent spirits and other dangers.[35]

In this manual, although the syllables of the protective chant are used to represent the six elements and *citta*, the power inherent in the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant, which is derived from the canonical *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula, is retained and employed to aid the meditator's attainments.

The protective chant can also be chanted according to the practitioner's day of birth. For example, the first verse is for those who are born on Mondays, and is to be chanted 15 times a day; the second verse is for those who are born on Tuesdays, and is to be chanted eight times a day; Wednesday is divided into two verses, verse three for those who are born during daytime and verse four for those who are born during nighttime; and so on.

The bilingual poster in figure 3 is from Wat Hua Lamphong, Bangkok, and was placed next to the eight Buddha images of the days of the week. The eight verses correspond to the eight Buddha images (with Wednesday consisting of two images). The devotee would pay respect to the Buddha image of their day of birth while reciting the corresponding verse from the protective chant.

Figure 3: A poster of the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant divided into the days of the week at Wat Hua Lamphong, Bangkok

The syllables of the protective chant in Khom script are also tattooed on the body, inscribed on amulets and metal sheets, and drawn on pieces of cloth to make *yantras*, or protective diagrams consisting of geometric, animal, and deity designs accompanied by Pāli phrases.[36] The *yantra* containing the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant is called Yan Kro Phet (Diamond Shield Yantra) and is known for its protective power.

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF THE METHOD

This section is an attempt to show the possible canonical, noncanonical, and *boran kammaṭṭhāna* sources of the method. As mentioned above, the origins of the method are unknown. According to Luang Pho Wira, Somdet Suk did not develop the method, but inherited it from the lineage of Somdet Phra Phonrat of Wat Pa Kaew, Ayutthaya.

Although the list of seven objects is unique to the manual, the six elements (earth, water, wind, fire, space, and consciousness) may have been adapted from the discourses of the Buddha that provide instructions on how to contemplate them. These include the *Dhātu Sutta* (Elements Discourse) (S iii 227), the *Chabbisodhana Sutta* (Sixfold Purity Discourse) (M iii 30), and the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* (M iii 237). The *Dhātu Sutta* characterizes the stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*) as one who sees the six elements as inconstant and changeable, and the *Chabbisodhana Sutta* describes the arhat as one who does not take them as self (*attā*) or see a self based on them. The *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* elaborates on the five physical elements (earth, water, wind, fire, and space), providing their characteristics and examples. All their external and internal forms are to be seen as they are (i.e., as only elements [*dhātu*]) and not to be taken as self. Moreover, pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings that arise from consciousness cognizing various sensory objects are contemplated and seen to be dependent on sensory contact: when sensory contact ceases, all the feelings that arise dependent on it also cease and are stilled. Once sensory contacts are stilled and the practitioner attains the *jhānas*, the *sutta* states that "there remain[s] equanimity pure and bright, pliant, malleable and luminous," and uses the metaphor of the refinement of gold to explain its nature.[37]

In Baep Doen That, the practitioner who has mastered the fourth *jhāna* also examines the six elements (with an addition of *citta*) and the feelings and states of mind that arise in meditation, understands their characteristics, and so on. They then apply the three marks of impermanence, suffering, and not-self to all of them. This exercise is repeated until the practitioner is able to "open up and brighten the world" and achieve a vision of the luminous sphere of their mind that has attained the supernormal knowledges and powers; its luminosity is due to the equanimity arising from having all the attachments faded from it.

The *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta* is among the discourses of the Buddha that describe consciousness and mind (*citta*) as luminous (*pabhassara*), the best-known being the passage from the *Pabhassara Sutta* (Luminous Discourse) (A i 10) of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Numerical Discourses):

> Luminous, monks, is the mind. And it is defiled by incoming defilements. The uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn't discern that as it actually is present, which is why I tell you that—for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—there is no development of the mind.[38]

In other discourses, this pure and luminous mind is acquired through the removal of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and the attainment of *jhānas*. The *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (D i 47), for example, states that when the practitioner attains the fourth *jhāna*, having abandoned all pleasant and unpleasant feelings and abiding in the state of equanimity, they gain an awareness of a pure and bright mind that pervades the entire body. The characterization of the mind as innately pure and luminous, but covered by adventitious defilements, may have been the basis for *boran kammaṭṭhāna*'s common practice of invoking light spheres to appear on and inside the meditator's body. The luminous spheres of various colors, which are sometimes accompanied by image manifestation of Pāli syllables and/or Buddha images, can, in this tradition, represent meditation objects, processes, and states mentioned in the Pāli Canon and *Path of Purification*. They are then moved between the bodily bases in various orders and directions to achieve increasingly refined mental and physical states.[39]

The fourfold method of analyzing *dhammas*, mentioned briefly in this manual without any explanation, is most likely derived from the Pāli commentaries and/or the *Path of Purification*. In its explanation of the analysis of the four elements (*dhātu-vavatthāna*), the *Path of Purification* provides examples of the different ways in which the four elements can be understood, broken down, and examined. One way is through examining their characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes (Vsm 365). The *Path of Purification*'s analysis of the four elements does not include space and consciousness elements. Space and consciousness elements are, however, incorporated into the *Path of Purification*'s formless (*arūpa*) meditation section, as sphere of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*) and sphere of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*).[40]

Baep Doen That also contains aspects of *kasiṇa* meditation, or external visualization devices, to develop concentration, image manifestation, and *jhānas*. In the *Mahāsakuldāyi Sutta* (Great Sakuldāyi Discourse) (M ii 1), the six elements are included in the list of 10 *kasiṇas*, which consists of the six plus four colors: blue, yellow, red, and white. The practice of visualizing them infinitely in all directions is explained and incorporated into the path to enlightenment in this *sutta*.[41] The 10 *kasiṇas* in the *Path of Purification* are identical to the canonical list, apart from consciousness *kasiṇa*, which the *Path of Purification* omits and replaces with light (*āloka*) *kasiṇa*. Space is included in the *kasiṇa* section as limited space (*paricchinnākāsa*).[42] Baep Doen That, however, offers a *boran kammaṭṭhāna* approach of using sacred Pāli syllables as objects of visualization instead of the natural forms of the elements.

The visualization of Pāli syllables is a common practice in *boran kammaṭṭhāna* and is found in many of the surviving manuals belonging to the tradition. For example, the meditation manual of the late Ayutthaya period from Wat Pradusongtham, Ayutthaya—where Somdet Suk studied meditation and received his ordination—consists of visualizing Khom syllables written on three *yantra* diagrams that represent the qualities of the Buddha, the *dhamma*, and the *saṅgha*.[43] The syllables of the three diagrams are taken from the entire canonical *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula: 56 syllables for the qualities of the Buddha, 38 syllables for the qualities of the *dhamma*, and 121 syllables for the qualities of the *saṅgha*.

The name Baep Doen That is not unique to Somdet Suk's lineage; it is a common name among Thai *boran kammaṭṭhāna* manuals that provide methods of visualization of the elements. Chai Yasothonrat's 1935 collection, the largest publication of *boran kammaṭṭhāna* texts, contains three

other Baep Doen Thats of unknown date and author.[44] The one titled "Baep Doen That Tham Chit Hai Pen Samathi" ("Method of walking the elements for the mind to gain *samādhi*") consists of visualizing eight Pāli syllables, *Na Ma Ba Dha* and *Ca Ba Ka Sa*, in Khom script, each representing one of the four elements. *Na* and *Sa* represent the earth element; *Ma* and *Ka*, the water element; *Ba* and *Ba*, the wind element; and *Dha* and *Ca*, the fire element. The eight syllables are to be recited and visualized repeatedly in forward and reverse orders until the image manifestation of all the eight syllables are achieved. The meditator then visualizes the syllable *A* as representing the space element before removing all the image manifestation to gain a vision of a luminous sphere, which the manual terms "Sphere of the Light of Dhamma" (*Duang Prathip Tham*).[45] The luminous sphere is equated with the meditator's consciousness element and is said to be the result of the elements being correctly "mixed together." The eight syllables are explained as "conventional forms" of the four elements, having *A* as their "principal" in the same way as the four elements have space and consciousness elements as their principals.[46] Two other Baep Doen Thats in Chai Yasothonrat's collection provide similar methods of visualizing *Na Ma Ba Dha* and *Ca Ba Ka Sa* and their variations. It is possible that the developer of this method practiced visualizations of Pāli syllables and/or different Baep Doen Thats at various temples of Ayutthaya and adapted their techniques into this Baep Doen That.

CONCLUSION

In the Thai *boran kammaṭṭhāna* tradition, Baep Doen That is a generic name for meditation methods that consist of the visualization of the elements represented by sacred Pāli syllables. Somdet Suk's "Baep Doen That," however, is unique among these methods as it uses the visualization model common to the tradition and tailored it for the development of all eight supernormal knowledges and powers. To aid the meditator's attainments, the method harnesses the power of the syllables of the *Iti Pi So* Eight Directions protective chant, a popular variation of the canonical *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula.

Another unique aspect of the method is its list of seven objects of the six elements plus *citta*. Although the list of the six elements is canonical, the list of seven is not found anywhere in the Pāli Canon, the commentaries, the sub-commentaries, or other *boran kammaṭṭhāna* sources. According to Luang Pho Wira, the consciousness element refers to the aspect of the mind that cognizes mental and physical objects, and *citta* refers to all its other aspects. These other aspects are examined when the meditator contemplates their mental states by way of the fourfold method of analyzing *dhammas*.[47] The reference to the fourfold method, which is given in Pāli in the manual without any explanation, attests to Somdet Suk's knowledge of the Pāli commentaries and the *Path of Purification*.

The article also reveals how one of the most important lineages of *boran kammaṭṭhāna* views the relationship between *samatha* and *vipassanā*. In this method, and also in the Matchima Baep Lamdap system, divine eye and the fourth *jhāna*—the result of the rigorous practice of *samatha*—are prerequisites for the development of *vipassanā*. All mental and physical states experienced in meditation are to be seen with divine eye to achieve a deeper and more thorough understanding of their nature, and *vipassanā* prior to *jhānas* is frowned upon. Once insight knowledge is developed in the first model, it is constantly practiced along with other powers so that the practitioner does

not become attached to them. The constant development of insight culminates in the attainment of the knowledge of the destruction of influxes and *nibbāna* in the eighth and final model. This view is, then, contrasted with the view of the Burmese "dry insight" tradition, which emphasizes *vipassanā* over *samatha*, stresses momentary concentration over access concentration and attainment concentration, and dispenses with *jhānas* as the foundation for insight.

Further research into other *boran kammaṭṭhāna* texts and living lineages would allow for a comparison of their views on the relationship between *samatha* and *vipassanā* and contribute to the ongoing discussions in Buddhist Studies regarding the necessity of *jhānas* as prerequisites for insight and the attainment of *nibbāna*.

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NOTES

[1] For the history of Somdet Suk's meditation lineage, see Phibul Choompolpaisal, "*Boran Kammatthan* (Ancient Theravāda) Meditation Transmissions in Siam from Late Ayutthaya to Rattanakosin Periods," *Buddhist Studies Review* 38, no. 2 (2021): 225–252.
[2] Phra Khru Sangkharak Wira Ṭhānavīro, *Phra Prawat Somdet Phra Sangkharat Yansangwon* (Bangkok: Satisampachanya, 2012).
[3] In this article, I am using Wat Ratchasittharam's 1968 reprint of Luang Wisan Darunakon's publication, which is given on pages 103 to 107 of the book; see Wat Ratchasittharam, *Withi Patibat Kammathan Wipatsana Baep Tontamrap Doem Khong Phra Phonrat Wat Pa Kaeo* (Bangkok: Wat Ratchasittharam, 1968). For the manual in Chai Yasothonrat's publication, see *Nangsue Phuttharangsi Thritsadiyan wa duai Samatha Wipatsana Kammathan Si Yuk* (Bangkok: Wat Boromniwat, 1935), 304–307.
[4] Wat Ratchasittharam, *Withi Patibat Kammathan*, 29–30.
[5] Mettanando Bhikkhu, "Meditation and Healing in the Theravāda Buddhist Order of Thailand and Laos" (PhD diss., Hamburg University, 1998); Olivier de Bernon, "Le Manuel des Maîtres de Kammaṭṭhān" (PhD diss., Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris, 2000); and Phibul Choompolpaisal, "Nimitta and Visual Methods in Siamese and Lao Meditation Traditions from the 17th Century to the Present Day," *Contemporary Buddhism* 20, no. 1 (2019): 1–32; Kate Crosby, *Traditional Theravada Meditation and Its Modern-Era Suppression* (Hong Kong: Buddha Dharma Centre, 2013); Andrew Skilton and Phibul Choompolpaisal, "The Ancient Theravāda Meditation System, *Borān Kammaṭṭhāna*: *Ānāpānasati* or 'Mindfulness of the Breath,' in Kammatthan Majjhima Baeb Lamdub," *Buddhist Studies Review* 32, no. 2 (2015): 207–229; and Patrick Ong, *The Supreme Patriarch and His Walking Stick: The Meditation Legacy of Suk Kai Thuean and Its Implications for Theravada Buddhism in Thailand* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2013).
[6] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, September 24, 2023.
[7] *Jhānas*, translated as mental absorptions, are states of deep concentration, in which the five mental hindrances are suppressed and awareness is fully absorbed in the object of meditation. The first *jhāna* consists of five factors: applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*). The second *jhāna* consists of three factors: joy, happiness, and one-pointedness of mind. The third *jhāna* consists of happiness and one-pointedness of mind. The fourth *jhāna* consists of one-pointedness of mind and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*), sluggishness (*thīna-middha*), agitation (*uddacca-kukkucca*), and doubt (*vicikicchā*).
[8] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, September 24, 2023.
[9] For a comprehensive survey and analysis of its historical evidence and processes that led to its suppression and marginalization, see Kate Crosby, *Esoteric Theravada: The Story of the Forgotten Meditation Tradition of Southeast Asia* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2020).
[10] See Crosby, *Esoteric Theravada*, chap. 2 and chap. 4; and Alistair Gornell, "Pāli: Its Place in the Theravāda Buddhist Tradition," in *Routledge Handbook of Theravāda Buddhism*, ed. Stephen C. Berkwitz (London: Routledge, 2022), 43–57.
[11] *Nimitta* (Thai: *nimit*) is a Pāli term variously translated as a sign of concentration, an image manifestation, an eidetic image, or a mental image. It refers to different kinds of visions that arise in meditation. The term is often associated with the practice of *kasiṇa* visualizations. For Pāli textual references, see, for example, *Bhikkhunupassaya Sutta* (S v 154), *Upakkilesa Sutta* (M ii 152), *Saṅgaṇikārāma Sutta* (A iii 422–423), and *Visudhimagga* (chap. 4 and chap. 8).
[12] Regarding the origins and internationalization of the Burmese dry insight tradition, see Erik Braun, *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Lance Cousins, "The Origin of Insight Meditation," *The Buddhist Forum* 4 (1994–1996): 35–58; and Robert H. Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *NUMEN* 42 (1995): 228–283.
[13] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 3, 2023.
[14] Wat Ratchasittharam, *Withi Patibat Kammathan*, 32.

[15] When I refer to the Pāli Canon and the *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*), I cite the volumes and page numbers of the Pali Text Society editions.
[16] See also *Titthāyatana Sutta* (A i 174), *Chabbisodhana Sutta* (M iii 30), and *Bahudhātuka Sutta* (M iii 62).
[17] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 3, 2023.
[18] *Parittas* are Pāli verses of both canonical and noncanonical origins that are chanted by monastics and laypeople as part of their daily practice to gain protection, auspiciousness, and success in various endeavors. The *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula is a well-known protective chant. It is found throughout the Pāli Canon and consists of three sections describing the qualities (*guṇas*) of the Triple Gems (Buddha, *dhamma*, and *saṅgha*).
[19] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 17, 2023.
[20] Wat Ratchasittharam, *Withi Patibat Kammathan*, 103–104.
[21] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 3, 2023. Khom script, which is derived from the round-shaped Khmer Mul script, has been used in Thailand for writing Pāli from at least the 13th century.
[22] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 3, 2023.
[23] For a discussion on the different types of orders and permutations in the Matchima Baep Lamdap's meditation exercises, see Andrew Skilton and Phibul Choompolpaisal, "The Old Meditation (*Boran Kammatthan*), a Pre-Reform Theravāda Meditation System from Wat Ratchasittharam: The Pīti Section of the Kammatthan Matchima Baep Lamdap," *ASEANIE* 33 (2014): 103–107.
[24] Wat Ratchasittharam, *Withi Patibat Kammathan*, 103–104.
[25] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 17, 2023.
[26] See *Visudhimagga* (126) for its explanation of acquired image and counterimage.
[27] The method originates in the paracanonical texts, *Peṭakopadesa* and *Nettippakaraṇa*, where it is applied only selectively and *rasa* (function) is omitted. I would like to thank Rupert Gethin for his clarification regarding the fourfold method.
[28] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 26, 2023.
[29] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 26, 2023.
[30] See Braun, *Birth of Insight*, chap. 5.
[31] Wat Ratchasittharam, *Withi Patibat Kammathan*, 107.
[32] Vsm 441; for a discussion of this view of Pāli, see Crosby, *Traditional Theravada Meditation*, chap. 3; and Gornell, "Pāli," 43–57.
[33] For a study of *parittas* in Theravāda Buddhism, see Peter Harvey, "The Dynamics of *Paritta* Chanting in Southern Buddhism," in *Love Divine*: *Studies in Bhakti and Devotional Mysticism*, ed. Karel Werner (London: Curzon, 1993), 53–84.
[34] Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom, 2000), 319.
[35] Thep Sarikbut, *Khamphi Phutmon Osot* (Buddha-mantra medicine collection) (Bangkok: Soemwit Bannakhan, 1995), 42.
[36] The usage of the *Iti Pi So Bhagavā* formula and its variations as mantras and *yantras* in Cambodia is discussed in François Bizot and Oskar von Hinüber, *La Guirlande de Joyaux* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1994). For its usages in Myanmar, see Thomas N. Patton, "In Pursuit of the Sorcerer's Power: Sacred Diagrams as Technologies of Potency," *Contemporary Buddhism* 13 (2012): 213–231.
[37] Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., "Dhatu-vibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Properties," Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), November 30, 2013, accessed January 29, 2024, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.140.than.html. The commentary to the *sutta* explains that this equanimity is achieved through the attainment of the fifth *jhāna* or sphere of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*, the first of the formless absorptions) (MA 5: 53).
[38] Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., "Pabhassara Sutta: Luminous," Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), November 30, 2013, accessed January 29, 2024, https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an01/an01.049.than.html. See also *Nimitta Sutta* (A i 255), *Samādhi Sutta* (A ii 44), and *Udāyī Sutta* (A iii 323).
[39] Crosby, *Esoteric Theravada*, chap. 2. The concept of the "luminous mind" (Sanskrit: *prabhāsvara-citta*) in early Buddhist literature also became the basis for the Tathāgatagarbha (Buddha-nature) doctrine found in Mahāyāna scriptures and later the practices of Chan/Zen, Buddhist tantra, Mahāmūdra, and Dzogchen. For further discussions on this issue, see Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness, and Nirvana in Early Buddhism* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004), chap. 10; and Bhikkhu Anālayo, *Developments in*

Buddhist Meditation Traditions: The Interplay between Theory and Practice (Barre, MA: Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, 2022), 59–113.

[40] See *Visuddhimagga*, chap. 10 and chap. 11, for its explanations of the formless meditation and analysis of the four elements.

[41] See also *Kasiṇa Sutta* (A v 46) and *Paṭhamakosala Sutta* (A v 60).

[42] The 10 *kasiṇas*, the analysis of the four elements, and the formless meditation are also enumerated in the ninth chapter of *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*, the influential 12th-century Abhidhamma manual written by Anurudha. The chapter summarizes the 40 meditation subjects of the *Visuddhimagga*. Its list of the 10 *kasiṇas*, identical to the *Visuddhimagga*, omits consciousness *kasiṇa* and replaces it with light *kasiṇa.*

[43] Potprecha Cholvijarn, "Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha Yantras: An Ayutthaya Period Meditation Manual from Wat Pradusongtham," *Journal of the Siam Society* 109, no. 1 (2021): 63–82.

[44] Chai Yasothorat's collection was published in 1935, shortly after Luang Wisan's publication. It was compiled and edited by Phra Mahājotipañño (Chai Yasothonrat) of Wat Boromniwat, Bangkok, under the supervision of the abbot, Phra Upāli Khunupamachan (Chan Siricando).

[45] Chai Yasothonrat, *Nangsue Phuttharangsi Thritsadiyan*, 298.

[46] Chai Yasothonrat, *Nangsue Phuttharangsi Thritsadiyan*, 298.

[47] Interview of Luang Pho Wira by the author, October 3, 2023.