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Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies, Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 2017, pp. 82-105 (Article)



Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mns.2017.0004>

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Cultural Goods and Flotsam

Early Thai Manuscripts in Germany and Those Who Collected Them

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THE CHIEF GERMAN LIBRARIES and museums hold tens of thousands of Oriental manuscripts, but relatively few of them originate from Siam. Few Germans can read Thai, and unless illustrations guide the observer, librarians and museum's custodians, when confronted with a *samut thai* or a text incised on *bai chāk*, often find it impossible to decide what is top and what bottom, or where is the beginning and where the end of a text. When on 25 July 1930 Prince Damrong visited the Berlin Ethnologisches Museum (ethnological museum), he not only was shown its most valuable Siamese manuscript (the *samutphāp traiphūm*, on which more below) but also was asked to assist the director with the identification of Siamese books.¹ This survey deals with the time between 1830 and 1930. During that period, some scholars, travelers, and traders carried manuscripts that ended up in public collections, but most Siamese documents that found their way to libraries and museums came from individuals employed by the Siamese government. It is a mixed bag that ended up in

1 Sasitharamas Cattiyakorn, *Die deutsch-thailändischen Beziehungen in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik bis zum Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs* (Hamburg: Kovac, 2012), 119–20.

German collections—much of it is of little scholarly interest, but there are a number of documents worth studying.

The Manuscripts

More than fifty years ago, Klaus Wenk published two volumes on the Thai manuscripts kept in German public collections, in which he described a total of 246 documents, spread over fourteen separate institutions in ten different cities.²

He listed them in eight rubrics as follows:

1. Astrology, dream interpretation, and folklore (34 texts)
2. Buddhism (30 texts)
3. History (11 texts)
4. Literature (96 texts), further subdivided into:
 - a. Large epic poems, or fragments thereof (18 texts)
 - b. Fairy tales, stories, and *lakhon*-theater (53 texts)
 - c. Proverbs (9 texts)
 - d. Metrics (6 texts)
 - e. Grammar (5 texts)
5. Medicine (28 texts)
6. Legal texts (11 texts)
7. Picture books (26 texts)
8. Various (translations and typologies) (10 texts)

However, even though this list covers more than two hundred items, for several reasons it may not be taken as a representative sample of the holdings at that time in German public collections.

2 Klaus Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, vol. IX, 1 and 2 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963, 1968).

First, it should be realized that the German federation has a very complex, decentralized library and museum scene. This is because between 1866 and 1871 the North German federation incorporated various polities, and many a former capital retained anterior distinctions. No fewer than eight institutions claim the status of being a national library, twenty-five institutions carry the status of “state library,” and there are about eighty university libraries. As for the museums, of the thirty-nine ethnological museums, there are at least fourteen with collections that include objects from Asia. It is therefore no light undertaking to identify all Thai documents in German public collections, and it should not surprise us that Wenk overlooked, for example, the collection of ten Siamese manuscripts in the local museum in the town of Husum, mentioned below.

To complicate matters further, many museum curators and librarians are not familiar with Southeast Asian scripts. Thus, a Thai manuscript could be listed in a card catalogue as “Language: unknown” and “Content: unknown.” It is cumbersome and time-consuming to identify and inspect such items.³ Then, not all items in the catalogues marked as Siamese manuscripts are Siamese, the librarians being unable to decide whether a document in Cambodian script should be filed under a Cambodian or under a Thai label. Many manuscripts display more than one script, notably Khom (Khmer) for Pali words and Thai for explanatory sections. Sometimes Yuan, Burmese, or Lao documents have been classified under the rubric Siamese.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that Wenk decided to exclude all documents that had been written in Khom script, thereby omitting a large number of texts that clearly belong to the Thai cultural tradition, since prior to World War II, Khom was widely used as a sacred script. This explains, for example, why he mentioned only seven of Dresden’s holdings of fifteen Siamese manuscripts, and why he did not record the Phra Malai text that has been kept since 1908 in the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in

3 Not long ago I visited the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (German National Library) in Leipzig, and when I asked whether there were some manuscripts that had been catalogued in such manner, I was shown a dozen documents, all written in various Asian scripts. If my memory serves me well, four of these were written in Thai (two on magical spells and tattooing, one part of a piece of literature, and an incomplete legal text).

Cologne, and also the omission of a second Thai document there, that had been added in 1958.⁴ The same can be said for other Phra Malai texts, such as those donated to the state library in Munich and those that can be found in the Prussian state library in Berlin.⁵ This self-imposed restriction explains why Wenk described only seven documents in the possession of the Hamburg ethnological museum, while already in 1920 there must have been at least ten, and why he recorded for the Bavarian state library in Munich only four Thai texts, when its collection must have exceeded fifty.⁶

Therefore, it would be opportune to prepare a sequel to Wenk's two volumes, as he excluded and overlooked many Thai manuscripts.⁷ Furthermore, a large number were transferred from one institute to another, and there are many new acquisitions that can be recorded.⁸ Most impressive among the institutions that have acquired new Thai texts is the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (Bavarian State Library) in Munich, which today probably houses Germany's largest collection of Thai manuscripts. An undated handwritten catalogue from the Bavarian Library specifies a massive 278 items. Some remarkable entries from this catalogue are a Phra Malai text dated 1833 (BSB cod.siam 35), a ritual text of the Bangkok Brahmans (BSB cod.siam 129), a life of Christ in Thai (BSB cod.siam 149), three documents from the Thai court (BSB cod.siam 189), and a further four documents from the Thai court (BSB cod.siam 193).⁹

4 The Dresden manuscripts carry the signatures 6717, 6718, 6719, 6720, 6721, 6722, 6723, 6724, 6726, 6727, 6728, 6730, 25888, 33479 a, and 34575.

5 The Munich card catalogue notes that the donor was a "Mrs. Vijitajalathi," whose identity I have not yet established. The Berlin Phra Malai is now Ms. or. fol. 6563.

6 Prior to 1920, the museum acquired ten Thai manuscripts (inventory numbers A 26, A 903, A 904, 13.54:2, 13.54:3, 13.54:4, 16.40:5, 1532:08, 1532:08a, and 3033:07). I thank S. Knödel for this information.

7 For example, the four Siamese manuscripts that were obtained by the Berlin state library in 1862 (Ms. or. fols. 557–60).

8 All documents listed by Wenk as being in Marburg, where they were transferred and regrouped in 1946 under the label "Westdeutsche Bibliothek" (West German library), were returned to Berlin, and a large number of Thai manuscripts that Wenk located in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Museum of Indian Art) were also transferred to the Berlin state library.

9 The 1833 Phra Malai text (BSB cod.siam 35) came to the Munich collection from a "Mrs. Häfele" (the Häfele concern has been active in Thailand for more than ninety years).

The number of Phra Malai texts in collections around the world is worth a study in itself, Harvard having been recorded as possessing thirteen of them, the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin not less than twenty, and the British Library twenty-one.¹⁰ A conservative count reveals that the Munich Bavarian state library possesses no fewer than seventeen Phra Malai texts.¹¹ In Berlin I found nine.¹² The museum in Dresden also holds a Phra Malai, donated in 1912 by Karl Döhring, and the 1908 Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne possesses two of them, obtained in 1908 and 1998 (the latter one is, however, incomplete).¹³ In the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz is another Phra Malai text. Only a few have been scanned and put on the internet, such as BSB cod.siam 98, a richly illustrated text, written in *kblong*-rhyme, dated to the second half of the nineteenth century.

Ornamentation and Book-Related Objects

Traditional Siamese manuscripts may be divided into texts written on palm leaf and those made of paper. Each of these categories has its own typical appearance, method of collation, and storing. On all inscribed palm leaves, for example, there are two oblong areas (ca. 5 × 3 cm in size) kept free of writing. In the center of these spaces, all leaves are punctured, so that ropes can be threaded through the corresponding holes, leaving sufficient leeway to allow two successive leaves to be turned for reading. Large palm-leaf manuscripts are kept between wooden covers, and these also were punctured for the guiding ropes. In this way, it is possible to make palm-leaf books containing several hundred leaves, always in the proper order.

10 The information on the Chester Beatty Library is from Henry Ginsburg, *Thai Manuscript Painting* (London: The British Library, 1989), 103–4.

11 BSB cod.siam 6, 8, 9 (dated 1893), 13, 14, 17, 18, 31 (fragment), 35 (dated 1833), 36 (transferred from the ethnological museum), 93, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, and 130.

12 Ms. or. fol. 6563, Ms. or. fol. 6602 (dated 1881), Ms. or. fol. 6603, Ms. or. fol. 7955, Ms. or. 10612, MIK I 1430, MIK I 1431, MIK I 1432, and MIK 14745.

13 Possibly the Siamese manuscript, described as a fifteen-meter-long leporello with wonderful miniatures.



FIGURE 1. An elegant wooden bookmark. Photograph by the author.

Quite a different tradition developed around the paper folding books *samut thai*, often called “leporello.” Sheets of paper were folded accordion-style, and glued together, so that books of hundreds of pages could be created. The upper and lowest pages were often doubled up, then glued together to form a thick protective cover. The outside of the finished product could be treated with black or red lacquer. Some valuable manuscripts could be kept between decorated wooden coverings, with the final product safely wrapped in a piece of cloth.¹⁴

Some book-related items have been catalogued as if they were a manuscript. A typical Thai book-related object is the manuscript bookmark: a long slab carved from wood, bone, or ivory, on one side of which the title of a work has been written or inscribed.¹⁵ Valuable manuscripts, after having been wrapped in a cloth, were secured by binding a long cord around, the whole forming an anonymous “packet.” At the end of this cord the appropriate bookmark (sometimes called title indicator) was fixed. When storing a manuscript, this bookmark was slipped between cord and cloth so that a reader could at a glance identify a manuscript without having to unwrap it.

Other book-related objects were ornamental single-document bookcases, examples of which can be found in Munich, Gotha, and Hamburg. The bookcase that was bought in 1908 by the ethnological museum in Hamburg from the wife of Major Upathet (attaché at the Thai embassy in Berlin) provides a good example of lacquer-work art.

14 Further details in Barend Jan Terwiel, comp. and ed., *Shan Manuscripts Part 1*, *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*, vol. 39 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003), 21–24.

15 Thus, in the Munich state library manuscript catalogue, under cod.siam 33, we read: “7 ivory sticks with book titles.”

Probably the best description of how the artists managed to decorate such surfaces can be found in Buchler's account:

A very fine form of decoration much in use in Siam is that of book-cases and other articles with a lacquer background. First the article is smeared with a stopping of lacquer and ash. The surface is then smoothed down with the aid of a rough stone, then cuttle fish, and then with a very fine polish. Another layer of lacquer is then applied, after which the artist draws the design and paints the background with a special solution of gum and earthen powder, which is so absorbent that it leaves the design standing out in black. A very thin solution of lacquer, especially prepared, is put all over the surface, and over this gold leaf is laid by hand and then gently dusted off. The rest is then washed away, leaving the rich background with the design in gold.¹⁶

The Collectors

In his two volumes on Thai manuscripts in German collections, Wenk unfortunately did not mention the date when they were obtained, nor through whose mediation. Even though such information is often not or only in part recorded in the various institutions, it was possible to identify a number of early collectors. They are here introduced in temporal sequence.

The oldest Thai-related object in German collections is probably a large scroll kept in the Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden and filed there as Ca-129. It contains a drawing of King Phetracha's funeral procession that had taken place in 1704. The work had been made for Aernout Cleur, the chief of the Dutch trading office at Ayutthaya. It must have been sent to Amsterdam after Cleur died in 1712. August the Strong, the elector of Saxony and king of Poland, acquired it in 1728 at an auction in Amsterdam.¹⁷

16 Walter Buchler, "Arts and Crafts in Siam," *Asian Ethnology* 12 (1953): 127.

17 For details, see B. J. Terwiel, "Two Scrolls Depicting Phra Phetracha's Funeral Procession in 1704 and the Riddle of their Creation," *Journal of the Siam Society* 104 (2016): 77–92.



FIGURE 2. Detail of the bookcase in the Ethnological Museum Hamburg, acquired in 1908. The Buddhist monk probably represents Upagupta. Photograph courtesy of the Ethnological Museum Hamburg.

More than a century later, further Siamese documents were sent to Germany. Thus, there were some in the massive collection of Chinese works that Karl Friedrich Neumann obtained in 1830. In his own account of what he had brought from the East (approximately 7,000 items), he mentions some Siamese manuscripts.¹⁸ The Prussian Library in Berlin purchased 2,410 pieces that were handed over in 1831. Another major part of his massive collection went to the state library in Munich. It is not clear where the Thai material ended up. In one of the Munich catalogues there is an entry of a book from the Neumann collection described as “Siamese vocabulary,” but that work appears to have been written in the Chinese language.¹⁹ The Berlin accession record only lists Chinese works in the Neumann collection.

An early documented Siamese accession was an acquisition by the Prussian Library in Berlin, dated 1832. It is a traditional *samut thai dam*, written

18 Hartmut Walravens, *Karl Friedrich Neumann und Karl Friedrich August Gützlauff: Zwei deutsche Chinakundige im 19. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 96.

19 Verzeichnis der chinesischen Büchersammlung welche Dr. Neumann . . . der kgl. Staatsbibliothek überlassen hat, I (III), Item VIII.

with yellow ink. On the outside a piece of paper has been glued on, on which is written in Dutch: “De Brief aan de Hebreëen in het Siamisch voor het Nederlandsch Zendelings Genootschap, door de Vertaler,” or “The Letter to the Hebrews for the Netherlands Missionary Society, by the translator.” Probably this document was the first Oriental manuscript sent by Karl Gützlaff to the Prussian Library, for in 1826 Gützlaff had been sent to the East to preach the gospel by the abovementioned society, and between August 1828 and June 1831 Gützlaff had resided mainly in Bangkok. The translator was a Chinese-Thai assistant.²⁰

In November 1834, a whole set of documents, sent by Gützlaff and another preacher named Elias Röttchen, arrived at the state library in Berlin via the steamship *Matador*, and among them were some Siamese manuscripts as well as printed books. It is clear, however, that Gützlaff was the instigator, for only his name occurs in the ensuing correspondence, and also his name is written on the outer cover of most of these texts.²¹ At least seven Thai manuscripts were in this first batch; one of them (Ms. or. fol. 333, part of a version of the Ramakien) has recently been digitized.²² Fol. 334 is the eighth section of Sunthon Phu’s *Phra Aphaimani*.²³ A third Siamese manuscript sent by the missionaries (fol. 335) is a Christian sermon in Thai, relating a selection of biblical stories. Remarkably, in this sermon the Siamese translation of the concept “God” has been chosen as “Phraphuthichao,” and “God the Father” is rendered as “Phraputthichao-bidā.”²⁴ Fol. 336 is a

20 Kennon Breazeale, “English Missionaries Among the Thai,” in Ronald D. Renard, ed., *Anuson Walter Vella* (Chiang Mai: Walter Vella Fund, 1986), 208–28 at 218.

21 In Akta III F 17a 1834/1857 (Acta betreffend der von dem Missionar Gützlaff gemachten Geschenke etc.) a large number of letters relating to Gützlaff have been filed. Only the first of these documents deals with the 1834 batch.

22 Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. fol. 333, <http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dms/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN716261413>.

23 The latter two are mentioned in Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, vol. 1.

24 Gützlaff’s imperfect translation may have guided Prince Dinakon in his Wat Po description of John the Baptist as “He sits with bent hands and with feet wide apart in order to cure his stiff legs,” in A. B. Griswold, “The Rishis of Wat Pó,” *Felicitation Volumes of Southeast Asian Studies presented to His Highness Prince Dhaninivat Kromamun Biyalabh Bridhyakorn*, vol. 2 (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1965), 319–28 at 326.

Thai leporello with the translation of Luke's Gospel.²⁵ Fol. 337 is a copy of the *Prathom Ko Kā*, not a Siamese romance, as Gützlaff wrote on the cover, but a version of one of the famous didactic texts with which Thai children learned to read. Fol. 338 is the first part of the folktale Chanthakorop.

His file shows that Gützlaff, after having moved to China, was given permission to buy more items for the Berlin library, and consequently further manuscripts were thus procured until at least 1848, but none of these came from Siam.

In 1862 and 1863 the explorer Adolf Bastian spent almost a year in Bangkok, studying the local history and its documentary tradition.²⁶ Bastian must have collected a number of manuscripts. I assume that at least some of the twelve Siamese texts dealing with traditional medicine were in his luggage when he left Bangkok on 30 November 1863, for they formed the basis of an article he published in 1869.²⁷ In 1875 Bastian donated two Thai texts, collected during his year-long stay (one a collection of adages, and one a lexicon of Sanskrit and Pali words), to the recently founded Ethnological Museum of which he later became director.

There were more accessions on record for the year 1875. The collector was the diplomat Carl August Pieschel. Between 1851 and 1854, Pieschel had been Prussian consul in Mexico and had written a series of articles on Mexican volcanoes. He must have acquired Siamese manuscripts during his visit to Bangkok in 1861–62 when he took part in the Prussian expedition to Japan and Siam (an expedition accompanied by a number of scientists, selected to gather information on this part of the world). Pieschel's official function was secretary to the envoy Friedrich zu Eulenburg.²⁸ In Japan,

25 The state library of Munich also has part of Luke's Gospel in Thai (BSB cod.siam 1). I have not had the opportunity to compare the two documents.

26 See Adolf Bastian, *Reisen in Siam im Jahre 1863*, Die Völker des Oestlichen Asien, Studien und Reisen, vol. 3 (Jena: H. Costenoble, 1867).

27 Adolf Bastian, "Auszüge aus medizinischen Büchern der Siamesen," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 23 (1869): 258–65. The twelve Siamese texts are described in Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, 1:57–61.

28 The original Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation between the Kingdom of Siam and the German Union, signed on 7 February 1862, is a printed document, but since it possesses a handwritten protocol and the personal signatures of King Mongkut and his brother

Pieschel had already collected much material for his private ethnographic collection.²⁹

Pieschel arrived in Bangkok well ahead of the envoy, and on 26 November 1861 had already been received in audience with King Mongkut. In 1875 Pieschel sold his East Asian collection, and while his Japanese material went to Hamburg, the ethnological museum in Dresden bought twelve Siamese documents (three of these, all *samut thai*, were described by Wenk; the rest were Buddhist texts on palm leaf, written in Khom script).³⁰ Three of Pieschel's Thai manuscripts were bought for the Berliner Kunstkammer and ended up in the Berlin Museum of Asian Art.

On 13 March 1878 a Siamese palm-leaf manuscript was received by the Ethnological Museum in Hamburg, the first such document of its kind (Inventory Nr. A 46). The museum recorded that it came from E. Strokark Jr. The name Strokark is well known in Hamburg; a real estate firm of this name has been in existence since 1822, and in 1879 Adolph Strokark had become a partner in the shipping company Sloman. I have come across only one Strokark with the initial "E" for the nineteenth century, namely Martin Emil Strokark (1832–1902), who had become a partner in the real estate branch of his family in 1866. I found no evidence of a person of this name residing in Bangkok and assume that the Strokarks acquired the document during a world tour. An intriguing snippet: the newspaper *The (Melbourne, Vic.) Argus* mentions on Monday, 19 August 1878, in its shipping intelligence section: "Arrived, August 17, with the Swan from Western Port. Mr and Mrs Strokark and servant."³¹

Pinklao are attached, it has been classified as a manuscript (Ms. As. orient. No. 33). It is kept in the state archive in Gotha in a wooden bookcase, 42 cm long, 27 cm broad, and 9 cm high (Wilhelm Pertsch, *Die orientalischen Handschriften der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Gotha . . . Anhang* [Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1893], 52–53).

29 Sebastian Dobson, "Humboldt in Japan," in Sebastian Dobson and Sven Saaler, eds., *Under Eagle Eyes, Lithographs, Drawings and Photographs from the Prussian Expedition to Japan, 1860–1861*, 77–124 at 92–94 (Munich: Iudicium, 2011).

30 In 1875 he sold some 550 items, all acquired in 1861 and 1862 during his stay in China and Japan, to the Hamburg Museum of Ethnography, consisting of daily utensils, produce of artisans and popular art, among which were netsuke, scrolls, and furniture. Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften* 2:11–12. Signatures 6717 Siam–6728 Siam. Number 6726 contains the text of the Isigilisutta, from the Majjhima Nikaya.

31 Accessed at <http://trove.nla.gov.au>.

In 1880 two further Siamese texts on palm leaf were acquired in the Hamburger Museum from Gustav Falck. In contrast to the name Strokarcck, that of Falck is well connected with nineteenth-century Siam. *The Siam Repository* mentions the post boat of Falck & Co. In *The Siam Directory* for the year 1892, Falck & Beidek are listed as “Wholesale and Retail Merchants,” and various persons working for the firm are mentioned.³² In 1909 it is praised as Bangkok’s most exclusive shopping paradise.³³ At present, Falck is a major safety service enterprise in Thailand.

The next acquisition from Siam came from a person who identified himself as consul Arthur Kurtzhals. His name was recorded in 1883 as a new member of the ethnological society in Berlin, and it was recorded in 1885 that he donated two objects from Siam to the Ethnology Museum in Berlin, one of them a manuscript.³⁴ Between 1883 and 1891 Kurtzhals also gave a large collection of Siamese objects to the ethnological museum in Dresden, in which were also two Siamese books.³⁵

The fact that Arthur Kurtzhals carried the title of consul at first seemed puzzling, for his name does not occur in the list of German nineteenth-century consuls in Bangkok that Stoffers assembled.³⁶ However, in the reminiscences of Dorothea von Staden, Kurtzhals is mentioned as working

32 *The Siam Repository, containing a summary of Asiatic intelligence* (Bangkok: Samuel Smith, 1869), 1:185. *The Siam Directory for the Year 1892* (Bangkok, 1892), 191, 192, and 195.

33 Friedrich Schaefer, *Siamesisches Tagebuch; Ein deutscher Arzt in Bangkok, 1902–1912* (Bonn: Deutsch-Thailändische Gesellschaft, 1991), 36.

34 *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 15 (1883), Session of 19 May 1883, mentioned as new member: Arthur Kurtzhals, German consul in Bangkok, at present living in Steglitz. Kurtzhals is reported to have donated in 1885 an object from Siam to the Prussian Ethnology Collection, but it is not clear what that object might have been. The *Jahrbuch der Königlich preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 6, no. 1 (1885): xxxix, mentions en passant for the ethnological collections: “from Korea we record an interesting present from Mrs C. Arnau, likewise from Siam from Consul Kurtzhals [sic] and from Ceylon from Consul Freudenberg”; later in the same publication: “from Mr Kurtzhals [sic] in Bangkok a Siamese book.”

35 Described in Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, 1:26. A short description and some photographs of objects that Kurtzhals gave to the Dresden Museum can be found in the museum’s catalogue (Petra Martin, *Gaben an die Residenz, Ethnographische Kostbarkeiten aus den Kurfürstlich-Königlichen Sammlungen Dresdens* [Dresden: Museum für Völkerkunde, 2004]).

36 Andreas Stoffers, *Im Lande des weißen Elefanten; Die Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Thailand von den Anfängen bis 1962* (Bonn: Deutsch-Thailändische Gesellschaft, 1995), 330–31.

in the German trading firm “Markwald & Co.”³⁷ Kurtzhals must have been the successor to Paul Lessler, who as the head of the firm had in 1865 been awarded the Consul Patent for Prussia, and the Siamese had recognized his office as a consulate.³⁸

In 1885 Oskar Frankfurter sold a Buddhist text in 1885 to the Dresden ethnological museum. According to the museum’s record for this manuscript (6730 Siam), the document consisted of 399 palm leaves, was written in Khom script, and concerned the Pali grammar “Culasaddanipakarana.” This text had been sent at a time when Frankfurter was still fairly new to Siam, working on a three-year contract as “translator and secretary” for Prince Thewawong. When his employer was appointed minister of foreign affairs, Frankfurter stayed with him, eventually rising to the post of “chief translator” and later becoming general secretary to the foreign adviser Rolyn-Jacquemijns. Eventually he moved to the Bundesministerium des Innum (Ministry of the Interior), and in October 1905, Prince Damrong appointed him to reorganize the National Library of Thailand, a post he lost when Siam declared war on Germany in 1917.³⁹

The next donation of a valuable Siamese leporello (a text with medical recipes and colored pictures of deities and mythological characters) was part of a large donation of Siamese objects to the Dresden ethnological museum, by a person identified as “Schumann, Bangkok” (34575, Siam).⁴⁰ During the 1880s, the photographer F. Gerhard Schumann had worked in Bangkok. Although he was by no means the only and certainly not the king’s favorite photographer, after his return to Dresden in 1887 he called himself Royal Siamese Court Photographer, as shown in figure 3 (one of the few photographs that remain from a large number that he donated to the Ethnology Museum).⁴¹ Schumann also donated many objects from Siam to the

37 Dorothea von Staden, *Aus meinen Erinnerungen an Thailand* (unpublished manuscript in private collection of Jutta Baatz), transcribed at <http://www.mp.haw-hamburg.de/pers/Kaspar-Sickermann/thea/thea01.pdf>.

38 In the Bangkok Calendar for 1868, Paul Lessler is mentioned as the Prussian consul.

39 Otto Franke, “Oskar Frankfurter,” *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 10 (1922/23): 152–57.

40 See Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, 2:21.

41 Maurizio Peleggi, “Purveyors of Modernity? European Artists and Architects in Turn-of-the-Century Siam,” *Asia-Europe Journal* 1 (2003): 91–101 at 94, identified five German pho-



FIGURE 3. One of the entries to Wat Phra Kaew, with two kinnari, photographed by F. Gerhard Schumann. Reproduced courtesy of the Dresden Museum of Ethnology.



FIGURE 4. After returning from his time in Bangkok, F. G. Schumann proudly displayed King Chulalongkorn's royal seal.

museum.⁴² In figure 4, his Siamese distinction is further embellished with a seal, apparently inspired by that of King Chulalongkorn.

In 1894 Gerolamo Gerini sent five Siamese documents from Bangkok to the Berlin ethnological museum. This dispatch consisted of two books and three manuscripts. In an internal publication of the museum, two of the

tographers working in Bangkok in the 1880s and early 1890s. King Chulalongkorn's favorite among these five was F. Lenz.

⁴² I thank P. Martin, the curator of the museum, for this information. Another Dresdner photographer, G. R. Lambert, who arrived in Southeast Asia in 1875 and who set up studios in several Southeast Asian countries, also called himself Siamese court photographer (*Hofphotograph*).

manuscripts are listed as Buddhist texts (Mettaiphutthaphayakon, of twenty-three pages, and Vivāhamangkhala-kāthā, of fourteen pages), both taken from the series *Pathom Somphot*.⁴³ The third manuscript that Gerini sent, however, was one of Siam's most valuable documents, and the history of how the document was obtained is therefore worth mentioning in some detail. Müller describes it as follows: "Traiphum. The famous pictorial portrayal of the Buddhist cosmos, made for King Phaya Tak (1767–1782). Of this work there exists only a single copy and it deserves a special monograph. Acquired through the arrangement of Mr. Gerini in Bangkok."⁴⁴ Gerini had arrived in Bangkok in September 1881 as lieutenant in charge of training cadets and in 1887 had become director of the Royal Cadet School. He published a range of publications, the most important of them dating between 1895 and 1912, several of them testifying a profound knowledge of Thai ritual. The fact that Gerini donated this priceless *samutphāp traiphūm* to Berlin seemed anomalous.

However, in 1895 Bastian explained the unusual history of its acquisition.⁴⁵ More than thirty years before, Bastian had examined an exquisite *samutphāp traiphūm* in King Mongkut's royal library, and he had already described some scenes from this document.⁴⁶ His wish to study the document in further detail could at that time not be fulfilled. Bastian explains that in later correspondence on museum matters with persons in Bangkok, he had on various occasions mentioned his interest in that text. However, it could no longer be found in the palace library, so for many years his enqui-

43 Mettaiphutthaphayakon is probably the document listed as Berlin IC 13972 in Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, 16, no. 40. F. W. K. Müller, "Anzeige neu eingegangener siamesische Bücher im Königlichen Museum für Völkerkunde," *Ethnologisches Notizblatt* 2 (1894): 16–18. Müller was an assistant (*Hilfsarbeiter*) in Bastian's department at the Berlin ethnological museum.

44 "Traiphum. Die berühmte für König Phaja Tak (1767–1782) verfasste bildliche Darstellung des buddhistischen Weltalls. Das nur in einem Exemplar vorhandenen Werk verdiente eine eigene Monographie. Durch Vermittlung des Herrn Gerini in Bangkok erworben" (Müller, "Anzeige neu eingegangener siamesische Bücher," 16).

45 Adolf Bastian, "Das siamesische Prachtwerk Trai-Phūm (Die 'Drei-Welt')," *Ethnologisches Notizblatt* 2 (1895): 71–75.

46 Bastian, "Das siamesische Prachtwerk," 403.

ries were in vain. Then Gerini brought him on its trail. Bastian lets Gerini speak for himself by quoting his letter of 8 March, 1894. Here follow three passages from this letter:

Soon after receipt of it [Bastian's letter of January], I asked the loan of the famous Trai Phūm book once belonging to King Phyā Tāk, and sent notice to Dr Haase to come and see it, and then report to you his opinion.⁴⁷ I trust you have received his letter prior to this. I would, as a thorough connoisseur of the matter, strongly recommend the purchase of this unique work for your Museum, as I am sure that should not the present opportunity be taken advantage of, somebody else will buy the book.

Even the King's library does not possess a copy as beautifully illustrated of the same work, and I am sure, if the King knew of this copy, he would have it at once. Its present owner is a palace lady, descendant from the family of King Phyā Tāk, and as she keeps the book as a family souvenir, would not consent to part with on any account. But I got one of her relatives with whom I am in great intimacy, to induce her to sell it to me as I would, I said, send it to a European Museum to be kept there as an everlasting specimen of Siamese figurative art of years gone by. . . .

. . . As I feel a great interest in not leaving this rare work into the hands of the Siamese (for it is sure to get lost or damaged some day) I have decided to try to get some European Museum to purchase it as soon as possible, because I am afraid that either the owner may change idea or the book may change hands.⁴⁸

47 Erich Haase was a German zoologist who in 1890 had been appointed to set up a natural history museum in Bangkok. However, less than a month after Gerini sent this letter, Haase died of dysentery, aged thirty-five. A summary of his activities during his years in Siam can be found in Stoffers, *Im Lande des weißen Elefanten*, 113–14.

48 Gerini's letter (twenty-seven pages long) can be found in Akte 24/3.94 in the archives of the Berlin ethnological museum.

This letter was written less than eight months after the violent confrontation known as the Paknam Incident, when French gunboats had broached Siamese defences, blocked the Chaophraya River, and occupied some of its territories. Many foreign residents were aware that Siam's future depended on difficult negotiations between England and France. Only in January 1896 would it become clear that a weakened Siam was to survive as a buffer state. Throughout 1894, many Europeans working for the Siamese government were deeply concerned about the immediate future. This situation may have motivated Gerini to assist in salvaging one of Siam's treasures in the knowledge that it would be well kept in a proper museum.

However, in 1930, when Prince Damrong inspected this document, he noted that it had the same preface, written in the same handwriting, and painted in the same style as a *samutphāp traiphūm* that was donated in 1902–3 to the library of Wat Benchamabophit. The only difference between the two was that the document in Wat Benchamabophit was provided with a beautiful cover. He concluded that the Berlin copy was the lesser version and the one in Bangkok the original document that had been presented to King Taksin.⁴⁹

Two Thai documents were acquired by the Linden Museum in Stuttgart in 1906 from Karl Brügel.⁵⁰ They have been described as a fairy-tale *lin thong* (Hs. 56817 siam) and a chapter from the Ramakien (Hs. 56816 siam).⁵¹ In 1889 Graf Karl von Linden had decided to transform the Handelsgeographisches Museum (Museum of geographical trade) in Stuttgart into a scientific ethnological museum. The king of Württemberg, Wilhelm II, was one of the sponsors. Von Linden had found Karl Brügel, a medical doctor residing in Munich, prepared to go on an expedition and provided him with funds to search for objects for the collection. Brügel traveled twice to Southeast Asia for this purpose, and both documents go back to the first of

49 *Sāt Somdet, Lāiphābat Somdet Chaofā Kromphrayā Naritsarānuwatthiwong lae Somdet Kromphrayā Damrongrātchanuphāp*, vol. 10 (2475) (Bangkok: Munlanithi Kromphrayā Naritsarānuwatthiwong–Munlanithi Somdet Kromphrayā Damrongrātchanuphāp [*Princely instructions, correspondence of Prince Narit and Prince Damrong*], 2007), 312.

50 The documentation is unclear; the date 1908 is also mentioned.

51 Both described in Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, 1:33, 47.

these journeys. In 1911, one year after van Linden's death, the new museum was opened in Stuttgart.

The next Siamese document, a Phra Malai text, was donated in 1908 to the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne by Georg Küppers-Loosen (1860–1910). At present, it is being carefully restored. Küppers-Loosen was a scion of a wealthy trading family, and had been among the founders of the Association of Friends of the Museum. He traveled widely in the 1880s, and ethnographic photographs form an important part of the collection.

In the same year, 1908, the wife of Major Upathet (née Freye), attaché at the Thai embassy in Berlin, sold the rare book container to the Museum of Ethnology in Hamburg, mentioned earlier. Friedrich Schaefer has written a lengthy account of the role of the Upathet family after their return to Bangkok.⁵²

Also in 1908 the Hamburg museum acquired two Siamese manuscripts, written on palm leaves, as well as a Ramakien manuscript. In the museum's documentation, the provenance is registered as Sigmund Singer. Singer worked as an agent for the Firma Trau in Vienna, who after the death of Count Bourbon Baldi in 1906 had been entrusted with the sale of his immense ethnographical collection.⁵³

From the ethnology museum in Munich, its curator Dr. M. Appel wrote: "Our Siamese manuscripts, both paper folding books and palm leaf, were acquired by the museum between 1908 and 1914. The collectors were the Karl Brügel in Munich who supplied six manuscripts in 1908; Karl Döhring, who sold between 1911 and 1913 five manuscripts, and Wilhelm Sprater, from whom the museum obtained between 1910 and 1914 no less than twenty-seven manuscripts."

Of these three collectors, the medical doctor Karl Brügel has already been mentioned as having been sent by Graf von Linden to acquire material for the museum in Stuttgart. I expect that the reason why the six manuscripts

52 Schaefer, *Siamesisches Tagebuch*, 242–44.

53 Isao Komakura and Josef Kreiner, "Notes on the Japanese Collection of Count Bourbon Bardi at the Museo d'Arte Orientale di Venezia," *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology* 25, no. 4 (2001): 641–69.

did not go to Stuttgart can be found in the archival correspondence of both museums.

Karl Siegfried Döhring, who between 1911 and 1913 supplied the Munich museum with five manuscripts, is well known in Thai studies. After finishing his studies in architecture in Berlin in 1906, he took up a position in Bangkok, first as engineer with the state railways and three years later at the ministry of the interior. He designed a palace in Phetchaburi Province for King Chulalongkorn and Prince Damrong's Woradit Palace, and it has been recorded that Döhring preferred to be remunerated with antiques from their private collections.⁵⁴ After the sudden death of his wife in 1911, he took a year's leave in Germany, returning only for a relatively short period in 1912–13. He contacted various German museums, notably Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Munich, and Braunschweig, and a large number of valuable Siamese objects were sold by him from 1912 onward.

The first batch of objects that he sent to the ethnological museum in Leipzig were a donation, on the understanding that he would receive a proper high distinction. Accordingly, he was awarded with the order of the knight (First Class) of the Saxonian Order of Albrecht. In future dealings, he let himself be paid for his services. Most of the manuscripts he sent ended up in the ethnological museum in Berlin, but the museum in Dresden also received a set, among them a Phra Malai (25888 Siam).⁵⁵

Major Wilhelm Sprater was one of the many Germans who had found employment in modernizing Siam. He had found a position as a veterinarian in the Ministry of War, in the section General Inspection of the Land Forces.⁵⁶ Schaefer tells us that Sprater's work was rather badly paid, but not very demanding.⁵⁷ In 1914 he is recorded as a member of the Natural History Society and treasurer of the *Deutscher Flottenverein* (German Navy

54 Dietmar Grundmann, "Thailand im Umbruch—Die Sammlung Döhring im Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig," *Thailand Rundschau* 26, no. 1 (2013): 6–11 at 6–7.

55 Döhring wrote extensively on Siamese architecture, and later in his life became a successful novelist and translator, using the pen name Ravi Ravendro.

56 *Siam Directory 1912* (repr. Bangkok: White Lotus, 2005), 90.

57 Schaefer, *Siamesisches Tagebuch*, 29.

League).⁵⁸ The twenty-seven manuscripts that he sent to Munich represent the first sizable collection of Siamese texts to reach Germany.

In the 1913 *Jahrbuch der hamburgischen Wissenschaftlichen Anstalten* (Yearbook of scientific institutes in Hamburg), the director of the city library reported the receipt of a Siamese folding book containing medical information.⁵⁹ The donor is listed as Paul Trummer from Wandsbek. This must be the collector Paul Trummer, famous for his collection of seals and specialized on sphragistics and heraldry.⁶⁰ The public library system in Hamburg, however, has no record of the work, and up to the present I have not been able to trace this work.

The manuscript that came to the Munich ethnological museum in 1916 derived from Dr. Stönnner, at that time an assistant at the ethnology museum in Berlin. The Indologist Albert Heinrich Stönnner (1872–1931) might well have obtained the manuscript during the time he resided in Bangkok. His name is mentioned as a subscriber to Cartwright's work on Siamese language, and he attended the annual general meeting of the Siam Society of 1907, where he put his name forward to be elected as a member of its council.⁶¹ Later in his career, he became the director of the Indian section of the ethnological museum in Berlin.

Since Thai language and culture fell outside the German orientalist's competition, the acquisition of a Thai manuscript in a German museum or state library was a relatively rare event, items collected rather for their exotic appearance than for their content. Thus, it was relatively late that the Prussian state library finally bought a large private collection of Thai manuscripts (filed under Ms. or. fol. 3183–3268). The accession journal for 1916 records: "From the inheritance of the former State-apothecary Willems

58 *Directory for Bangkok and Siam 1914* (Bangkok: Bangkok Times Press, 1914), 312.

59 Robert Müntzel, "Stadtbibliothek, Bericht für das Jahr 1913," in *Jahrbuch der hamburgischen Wissenschaftlichen Anstalten* (Yearbook of scientific institutes in Hamburg) 31 (1913): 3–27 at 4.

60 Hans Nirrnhelm, "Paul Trummer und der Verein der Hamburgische Geschichte," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 20 (1915): ix–xv.

61 Basil Osborn Cartwright, *An Elementary Handbook of the Siamese Language* (Bangkok: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1906). The election resulted in a tie between two candidates, whereupon Stönnner withdrew his candidature.

through Hermann Rolle [Natural History Institute ‘Kosmos’ in Berlin] for a sum of 2000 Reichsmark.”

Hugo Willems was born in Bremen on 13 June 1863. He had studied chemistry, and in 1902, after having worked in Berlin, he applied successfully for a position in Siam, where he became the chief of the Government Medical Depot in Bangkok.⁶² Dr. Schaefer operated on him in March 1909 to remove a tumor on his back.⁶³ Like many other Europeans working in Siam at that time, he suffered from bad health, which forced him to leave Siam in April 1912, and he died on 1 January 1914 while still on leave. His obituary appeared in the *Bangkok Daily Mail* and the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser*, ending with the words: “The late Mr Willems was a very clever chemist and of genial disposition and had made many friends here, who will deeply regret to hear of his death.”⁶⁴

The agent mentioned by the museum in the sale of Willems’s Siamese manuscripts was Franz Hermann Rolle (1864–1929), a German ornithologist and entomologist who founded the Institute Kosmos in 1899. He sold bird and insect specimens to many museums and private collectors, especially to Alexander Koenig.

On 20 March 1916, the Hamburg ethnological museum recorded having received a single palm leaf with Siamese script from Eugen Engler. Engler was a well-known trader. In 1883 he joined the head office of Behm, Meyer & Co. in Singapore, and later set up and managed its Penang branch. In 1908 he left the Penang branch to join the Hamburg office. Since he was a Swiss national, he was not affected by the Siamese declaration of war against Germany in 1917, and therefore he was chosen at that time to take over the company’s Siamese assets and liabilities.⁶⁵

The Munich ethnological museum obtained one further Siamese manuscript in 1924 from Dr. W. J. Sweasey Powers. Powers was an American

62 *Directory for Bangkok and Siam* (1914), 280. Willems kept in contact with his guild as it was recorded that he sent the aquarium in Berlin ten rare snakes of the species *Chersydrus* (*Pharmazeutische Zeitung* 40, no. 69 [1909]: 726).

63 Schaefer, *Siamesisches Tagebuch*, 90.

64 *Bangkok Daily Mail*, 1914, and *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Adviser*, 1914.

65 Salma Nasution Khoo, *More Than Merchants: The German-Speaking Community in Penang, 1820–1940s* (Penang: Areca Books, 2006), 120.

doctor, born in Sacramento, California, in 1875. After completing his medical studies at Cooper Medical College (soon to become Stanford University), he went to Germany, where he studied mainly at the University of Berlin. He returned to the United States in 1915, practicing as a psychiatrist in New York. He died in 1938.⁶⁶ I have not been able to determine how Powers came in possession of the document, nor why he sold it to the museum in Munich.

Some time in the 1920s or early 1930s, another ten Siamese manuscripts were bought for the collection of Ludwig Nissen. These ten manuscripts were brought to Europe by the Austrian explorer Hesse-Wartegg, who visited Siam in 1898, and the others were collected by the physician Christian Rasch, who lived in Siam in the first half of the last decade of the nineteenth century (or by their heirs). Later the manuscripts were bequeathed to a museum in Husum.⁶⁷

In contrast to many other collections that were accumulated in German institutions, very few Siamese documents derived from missionary activities. The reason for this is twofold: on the one hand, proselytizing in Siam was difficult, and on the other, German missionary organizations concentrated on areas of the world where they ruled or where they could reckon with a sympathetic colonial regime, notably Cameroon, German East Africa, the Palau Islands, the Solomon Islands, Kaiser Wilhelms Land (Papua), Schantung, and Neupommern (New Brittany).

Only a few manuscripts fell into the hands of German explorers. We have identified Adolf Bastian, Karl Brügel, and Georg Küppers-Loosen. The most interesting category of persons causing the transfer of Siamese texts to Germany were those who had found employment in Bangkok, such

66 Ernst M. Falzeder and John C. Burnham, "A Perfectly Staged 'Concerted Action' Against Psychoanalysis," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 88 (2007): 1223–44.

67 Peera Panarut and Volker Grabowsky, "Overview of Thai Manuscripts at the Nordsee Museum (Nissenhaus) in Husum, Germany," *Journal of the Siam Society* 103 (2015): 199–234. Christian Rasch is mentioned in the 1894 *Directory for Bangkok and Siam* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996), 181, as being employed as "physician-in-ordinary" to King Chulalongkorn. Rasch published on the climate and illness in Siam in "Ueber das Klima und die Krankheiten im Königreich Siam," *Virchows Archiv* 140, no. 2 (1895): 327–84; and on the geographical pathology of Siam in "Zur geographischen Pathologie Siams," *Janus, Archives Internationales pour l'Histoire de la Médecine et la Géographie Médicale* 1 (1896–97): 445–60, 503–14.

as the photographer Schumann, the trader Arthur Kurtzhals, and especially a few who were employed within the Siamese civil service, such as Oskar Frankfurter, Karl Döhring, Gerolamo Gerini, Wilhelm Sprater, Hugo Willems, and Christian Rasch. However, the great majority of Germans who around the turn of the century lived and worked in Bangkok stayed in a “European cocoon” and did not come into contact with documents written in Thai or Khom script.⁶⁸

With this we finish our scrutiny of how Siamese manuscripts arrived in German collections in the period from 1832 to 1932.⁶⁹ After this time, the state libraries of Berlin and especially Munich continued to buy Siamese manuscripts from private individuals and at auctions, and only very rarely did other institutions obtain such items. The Rautenstrauch Joest Museum in Cologne, for example, received only two further items, a Buddhist text donated in 1958 by the anthropologist Friedrich Funke, and an incomplete Phra Malai in 1998 (a bequest of the art collector Hans Wilhelm Siegel).

Altogether, compared with the vast numbers of manuscripts that were collected during this period by Indologists, Turkologists, Arabists, and Sinologists, Siam remained underrepresented in Germany.

Both Döhring and Willems stand out as having collected with a plan. Most of the remaining Siamese items were accidentally obtained; in many cases the person buying the text was unable to read it and, even after asking, could obtain only a vague idea of its contents. Without being guided by illustrations, many a collector would not know what would be the upper side of a page. They were mysterious signs from an exotic land, and they also did not fit the prevailing idea that Europeans had a monopoly on “civilization.” Materials thus obtained are likely to have been of little practical value to those who sold them. Günter Bernhardt asked himself which of the

68 In November 1908, there were no fewer than forty-five Germans contracted to work for the Siamese government (Luis Weiler, *Anfang der Eisenbahn in Thailand* [Bangkok: Chalermnit, 1979], 169).

69 I assume that the Siamese manuscripts in the Heidelberg Ethnological Museum described in Wenk, *Thai-Handschriften*, 2:15–18, 21–22) arrived in Germany after World War II, since most of them carry the seal of the Bangkok National Library. Wenk published their signatures, and I hope they have meanwhile been returned.

objects that found their way to German institutions were “cultural goods” and which were just “flotsam and jetsam.”⁷⁰ Many of the Siamese documents discussed above can be caught under the second label, but at the same time it should not be forgotten that many a beachcomber has found something of value while turning over debris that has washed ashore.

70 Günter Bernhardt, “Kulturgut oder Strandgut der Geschichte,” in Günter Bernhardt and Jürgen Scheffler, *Reisen—Entdecken—Sammeln: Völkerkundliche Sammlungen in Westfalen-Lippe* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2001), 158–77.