

# Buddha and the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven

- Buddhist cosmology is also shaped by the visionary experiences of Buddha and his disciples
- Following enlightenment, Buddha ascended to the Tāvatiṃsa heaven—the second of the six Buddhist heavens, which stands at the top of Mount Meru
- This heaven is thought to be the loveliest and is home to a god known as Indra/Sakra and is the abode of Buddha’s mother (Queen Maya), who died in childbirth 35 years earlier
- Buddha shared the wisdom of Abhidhamma with his mother and after a period of 3 months residing in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, he descended back to earth by a celestial ladder of jewels
- While Buddha stood on the top-most rung of the ladder on mount meru, he could see the offerings of the devatās (heavenly beings) in different worlds and offerings from human beings
- Like Buddha, other disciples— Śāriputra, Moggallana, Phra Malai, King Nemi also reportedly visited the same Tāvatiṃsa heaven, and some spoke with the same being known as Phra Sri Araya Metrai, and likewise were granted a view of various hells.
- The belief in “Phra Sri Araya Mettrai,” the Future Buddha, is one of the most significant and expansive Buddhist beliefs in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. This belief has brought about several versions of related myths, as well as art works.

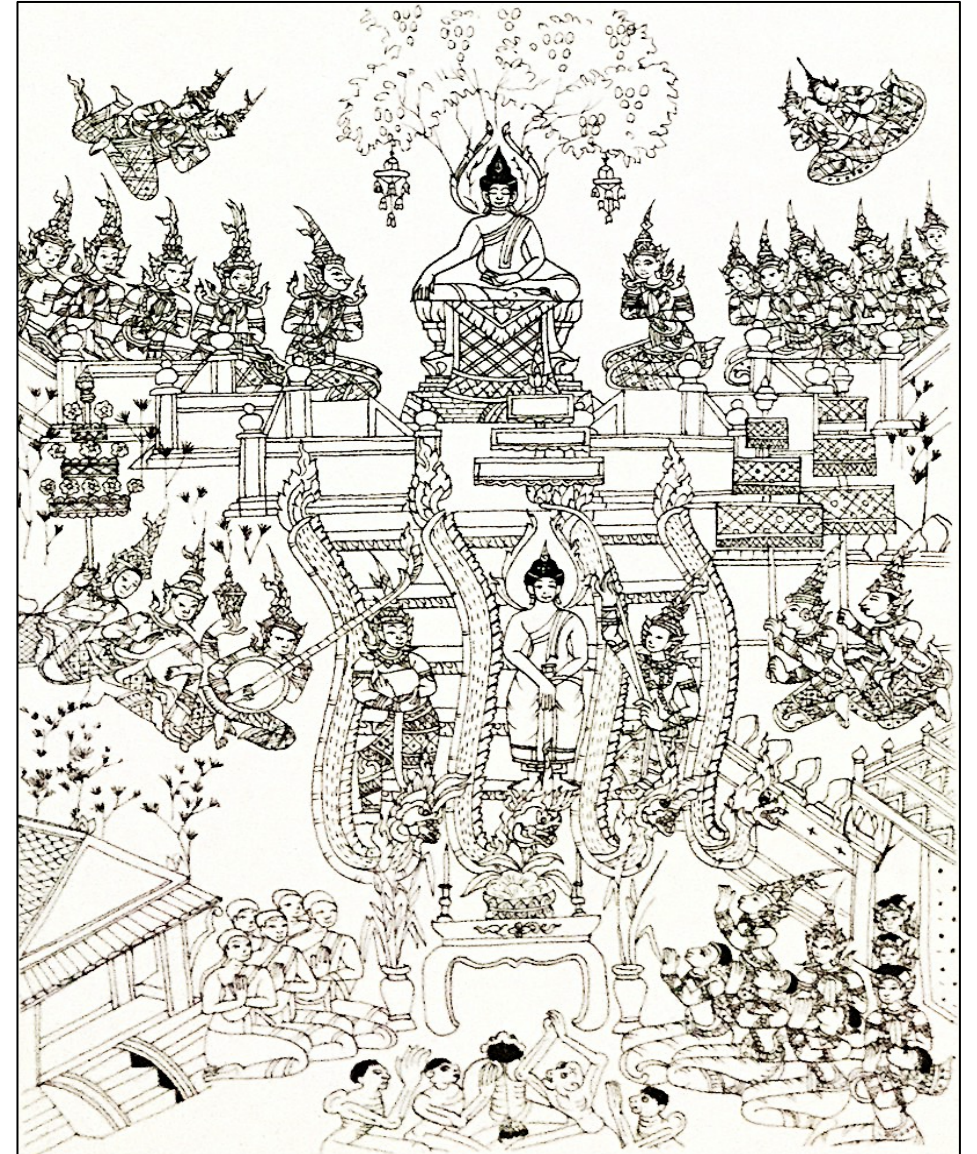


# Could Buddha have Prophesied of Christ?—What We Know

- There is a prophecy reportedly made by Buddha, while conversing with a Brahmin Priest, that possibly refers to Jesus Christ. Although the actual name referenced is: Phra Sri Araya Metrai/พระศรีอาริยมุตตรัย, this specific “reported” prophecy is not found in the current body of Buddhist text (post-5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Council versions of scriptures), but refers to a previous coming of Phra Sri Araya Metrai/พระศรีอาริยมุตตรัย where he introduces a “new way” and can be known by certain marks in his being –crucifixion marks.
  - “He will be the golden boat, who will carry you over the cycle of returns/rebirths all the way to the highest heaven”
  - “He will introduce a new spirit like the light of a lightening bug, which will come down from the sky above to live in all of your hearts”
- There is one (1) prophecy in the current Buddhist cannon that is associated with Phra Sri Araya Metrai/ พระศรีอาริยมุตตรัย and refers to coming of the future/last Buddha of the current world age, who comes as a conqueror of evil and will introduce peace, and is the only future Buddha mentioned in the Pali canon.
  - The name Phra Sri Araya Metrai literally means: all-powerful, glorious holy one, who acts in mercy
  - This one prophecy is contained in Buddhist scriptures—The Digha Nikaya (the first of the five nikayas, or collections, in the Sutta Pitaka—The long discourses of the Buddha),
  - Specifically in Sutta 26: “The Lion’s Roar on the Turning of the Wheel” (Cakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta).
  - BTW - The “Lion” is a symbol associated with this final Buddha—Phra Sri Araya Metrai
- The questions:
  - Who is Phra Sri Araya Metrai/ พระศรีอาริยมุตตรัย? What role does he play?
  - Why is it, that apart from Buddha, others (Phra Malai), who also ascended to the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, likewise met this same being they describe/refer to as Phra Sri Araya Metri?

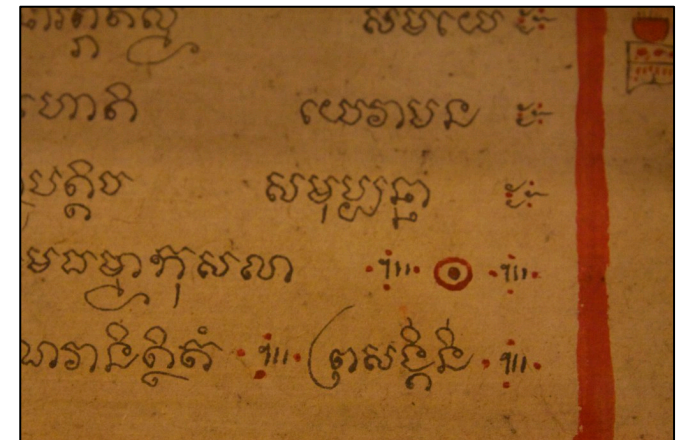
# What We Don't Know

- Apart from the The Digha Nikaya, was Phra Sri Araya Metrai/ พระศรีอาริยมุตตรัย ever mentioned in older versions of the Buddhist scriptures (pre-5<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Council)?
- Confirmation of where/how the other prophecy was recorded—is there is a surviving manuscript, if so, where it is being kept?
- Where did the other prophecy originate from? When was it recorded? Did it begin as an oral tradition?
- Did the other prophecy ever exist in any previous version of the Buddhist scriptures prior to the 5<sup>th</sup> Buddhist council?
- From what language was the other prophecy translated into Thai? Khom? Pali?
  - Khom is thought to be an ancient form of Khmer (Cambodian script), that used Pali as it's language (Maghada Sanskrit). This is considered to be a Sacred language and alphabet, and is used exclusively for Buddhist prayers, sacred texts and Kata
- Was Phra Sriwisutthiwong (the one who reportedly authorized the copy of the prophecy on 13 October 1954), a real person? If so, can he, or a record/confirmation of his existence be located?



# What We Think

- Although this prophecy is not in existence in current Buddhist Texts (Scriptures) even following the 5<sup>th</sup> Buddhist council in 1871 (where the final product was engraved on 729 marble slabs), we know prior that, the council deliberated on doctrines “thought” to be imported into Buddhism and all teachings considered heretical or false were eliminated—could “Sutrapridot 3:107” be among them? We don’t know
- Phra Sriwisutthiwong/ พระศรีวิสุทธิวงศ์, the one who reportedly authorized the the prophecy to be copied in 1954 was likely the Deputy Abbot and Director of Wat Pho Museum, Wat Pho Temple, Thailand. So there at least appears to be credence to his existence
- There is likely something at วัดพระสิงห์ (Wat Phra Singh) in northern Thailand. Sources as late as 2018, report monks at the temple confirmed the prophecy’s existence and pointed to a small building that contained the scripture. Other sources indicated it was recorded in the Khom language, which suggests it may not be decades, but perhaps a century/centuries old
- Even then, it will be impossible to trace/source tgus all the way back to Buddha, as his teachings were not put into written form until ~100 BC



# The Arguments: For and Against

<p>Criticism see:  <a href="https://sdhammika.blogspot.com/2009/09/bud-dha-prophe-sized-jesus.html">https://sdhammika.blogspot.com/2009/09/bud-dha-prophe-sized-jesus.html</a></p>	<p>Response</p>
<p>Structure, language, the similes used, etc. are markedly different from those found in the Buddhist scriptures.</p> <p>***Note: if you look only at the English translation of this reported prophecy (like Shrivasti Dhammika did), then it is easy to conclude this; however, one must closely look at the Thai script of the prophecy.</p>	<p>There <u>are</u> similar phraseologies if you examine the Thai script instead of the English translation. Example below:</p> <p><b>Authenticated statement of Buddha from a parable he used of a hill to compare the “impossibility” of something:</b>          "Suppose there was a solid mass, a cube of rock one yojana (~4 kilometers) per side and every hundred years a man was to stroke it once with a piece of silk. Then that mass of rock would be worn away sooner than an aeon would be past"</p> <p><b>Statement recorded in the reported พระศรีอาริย์เมตตรัย prophecy (enclosed):</b>          “The results of sin (sin &amp; karma) are very great – heavier than the sky; thicker than the earth; and so high, that it would be like an angel dusting the corner-posts at the temple compound with a cloth – posts that are 1 cubit (~18 inches high) – dusting them one time per year – until the posts were worn down to the ground. When the posts are worn down, that’s how long it would take to end your sins.”</p>
<p>Buddha is rarely referred to in the Tipitaka as ‘the Buddha’; he is almost always called and/or addressed as ‘Tathagata’ or ‘Bhagava’ (Lord).</p>	<p>In the Thai script of the reported prophecy, Buddha is referred to as “พระพุทธเจ้า” which means “Lord” and is the correct reference to the Buddha in Thai/Lao</p>
<p>The term ‘burnt offering’ has no Pali equivalent (Pali being the language of the Tipitaka) because making burnt offerings was not a practice done in ancient India.</p>	<p>Not necessarily true. “Homa” is Sanskrit for a ritual, wherein an oblation or any religious offering is made into fire. It is sometimes called a "sacrifice ritual" because the fire destroys the offering. The fire is the agent, and the offerings include those that are material and symbolic such as grains, clarified butter, milk, incense and seeds. Animal sacrifices were part of the ancient Vedic religion in India and adopted at times in ancient times by Buddhism and Jainism. The practice spread from India to Central Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia.</p>
<p>The word sin does not really have an equivalent in Pali, although it is a well-known Christian term.</p>	<p>Point taken; however, there is a word for sin “บาป” ในศาสนาพุทธหมายถึงสิ่งที่ทำให้จิตใจเสีย คือมีคุณภาพต่ำลง ไม่ว่าจะเสียในแง่ใดล้วนเรียกว่า บาปทั้งสิ้น หมายถึงความชั่วร้าย ได้แก่อกุศลกรรมทั้งหลาย the Theravada Buddhism and the Thai script of the prophecy lists this as บาปกรรม (sin/Karma), “กรรม” being the word for Karma</p>
<p>Nowhere in the Buddhist scriptures is Nirvana thought of as a kind of heaven</p>	<p>True; however, the actual word used in the Thai script of the prophecy is: “สวรรค์นิพพาน” คือสวรรค์ ในความเชื่อทางศาสนาพุทธ แปลว่า ภูมิหรือดินแดนที่มีอารมณ์เลิศด้วยดี เป็นที่อยู่ของเทวดา the word Niphan (Nirvana) is used; but also the word heaven is added at the end in parentheses. That said, the word “heaven” does exist in Theravada Buddhism and does refers to locations/paradise where gods and angels reside. This can be found throughout the texts and accounts. Nirvana is a transcendent state in which there is neither suffering, desire, nor sense of self, and the subject is “released” from the effects of karma and the cycle of death and rebirth. It represents the final goal of Buddhism—perhaps to “go no more out”</p>

# Maha Moggollana

- Among the Buddha's disciples, Maha Moggallana was especially known for his attainments and abilities. Notably, he traveled through various cosmic realms, bringing back to the Buddha reports of things that were transpiring in those worlds
- Notably, Supreme Wisdom (Prajnaparamita) is often personified as the Mother of All Buddhas, who is manifest especially in Maha Maya, the virgin mother of Gautama Buddha
- Prajna (wisdom), an aspect of the original Eightfold Path, has become the supreme paramita (perfection) and the primary avenue to nirvana. The content of this wisdom is the realization of the illusory nature of all phenomena—not only of this world, as in earlier Buddhism, but of transcendental realms as well



# Phra Malai

- Phra Malai is the Buddhist saint known for his legendary travels to heaven and hell, and has long figured prominently in Thai religious treatises, works of art, and rituals – particularly those associated with the afterlife
- Thai manuscripts date to the late eighteenth century, though it is assumed that the story is much older, being based on a Pali text from Sri Lanka. Phra Malai is mentioned in a Burmese inscription from the thirteenth century, and anonymous Northern Thai versions of the story may go back to the sixteenth century
- Phra Malai, according to the legend, visits heaven and hell and afterwards describes to the lay people and fellow monks what he has seen. In his visit to hell, people there implore him to warn their relatives on earth of the horrors of hell and how they may escape it
- In heaven, Phra Malai engages in discourse with the god Indra/Śakra. Eventually, he meets and speaks with the Buddha-to-come, Pha Sri Araya Metrai, who teaches him about the future of humanity on earth. Phra Malai was taught about the future of mankind, in which evil minded people will destroy one another, while those who follow the Buddha's teachings will be preserved



# King Nemi

- In several traditions, a righteous King Nemi is mentioned (as one of the previous lives of Buddha), who travels to heaven and hell in a celestial chariot.
- The story is mentioned in one text of the Pāli Canon, and two Pāli post-canonical texts
- Nemi was once overcome with doubt about whether leading a holy life and giving alms served any real purpose. The god Indra/Śakra himself appeared before Nemi with an answer
- When the other gods in Indra/Śakra's Tāvatiṃsa heaven, learned about Nemi, they wished to see him and a chariot was sent to fetch the king
- On his way to Tāvatiṃsa heaven, the charioteer guided Nemi through various heavens and hells
- After spending seven days with Indra/Śakra and other gods in Tāvatiṃsa heaven, Nemi returned to earth. He revealed to his subjects what he witnessed and confirmed that leading a holy life is indeed worthwhile

