

Translation

Tenets Spoken by Indra: A Translation of the Discourse on Good Judgement from the *Three Seals Law*

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Abstract

The Tenets Spoken by Indra is a discourse on good judgement from the Ayutthaya-era Three Seals Law. It has a lecture on avoiding the four wrong courses (agati), which is conventional for old legal texts in Buddhist societies, but in other ways is rather unusual. It may be unique among such old law texts in giving Indra the leading role. Its instructions to judges on reaching a good judgement employ several unusual figures of speech. It may technically still be in force. We believe this is the first full English translation of the text.

Keywords: Three Seals Law — Indra — Judgement — Four wrong courses — Ayutthaya

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I. INTRODUCTION

The *Tenets Spoken by Indra* (หลักอินทภาษ, *lak inthaphat*) is one of the Ayutthaya-era law texts collected by King Rama I in the *Three Seals Law*, issued as the law of Siam in 1805. It is notable in several ways. First, it may be unique in associating the god Indra with the making and usage of law. Second, it presents several striking similes and metaphors to express and dramatize the methods of achieving fair judgement in court process. Third, according to some scholars, it is still in force, which has interesting implications. The manuscript carries no date and the content offers no hint on its likely dating.

The god Indra has no special association with law in Indian tradition. In the sections on law in the *Manusmṛiti* or “Laws of Manu,” he appears only in lists of gods and as a general model for a king.¹ In the traditional legal systems with influences from India in Myanmar² and Cambodia,³ we are not aware of Indra taking any significant role.

Of course, Indra is the most prominent Indic god in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.⁴ He appears in the Buddha’s biography, notably at his birth, renunciation, and first sermon. He has a role in many *jātaka* tales as a protector of the Bodhisatta; his throne shakes or heats up when the Bodhisatta is in difficulty, prompting Indra to peer down to the mundane world to discern the problem and then execute a solution.

Indra presides over the Catumahārājika (four great kings) heaven where a Bodhisatta and other devotees sojourn between incarnations in the mundane world. In the frame story of *Tenets*, Indra tempts one such sojourner to become interested in a vacant and especially lovely *vimāna*, one of the celestial palaces which serve as a metaphor for heavenly bliss. Indra promises to grant the sojourner occupancy of this *vimāna* if he will first spend one mundane life instructing humans how to achieve fair judgements in court processes. The bulk of *Tenets* is then Indra’s instructions to the sojourner on this task. At the end, Indra insists the text is ascribed to him because the instructions “are considered excellent tenets for judges and magistrates, and as our name is Indra, all the words of ours spoken here are together called the Tenets Spoken by Indra.”

The first part of Indra’s instructions is an exhortation to judges to avoid the four *agati*, biases or wrong courses, namely desire, anger, fear, and delusion. This formula

¹ Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith, *The Laws of Manu* (Penguin Books 1991) 114, 128, 158, 184; Patrick Olivelle, *Manu’s Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmasāstra* (Oxford University Press 2005) 154, 185, 205.

² In the Burmese *Dhammavilāsa*, written before 1637/8, in a passage of similes similar to the latter part of this text, the *dharmasat* is compared to the “thunderbolt weapon” of Sakka (Indra), but the god has no role; in the *Manusāra dhammasattha*, Sakka helps a king and a seer to abridge a *dharmasattham*; see D. Christian Lammerts, *Buddhist Law in Burma: A History of Dhammasattha Texts and Jurisprudence, 1250–1850* (University of Hawaii Press 2018) 102, 184.

³ This text was translated into the Cambodian code promulgated in 1853; see the abridged French translation in Adhémard Leclère, *Codes Cambodgiens* (Ernest Leroux 1898) 28–36.

⁴ Naomi Appleton, *Shared Characters in Jain, Buddhist and Hindu Narrative: Gods, Kings and Other Heroes* (Routledge 2017) 25–56.

appears in several early Buddhist texts, and the exhortation to judges is a conventional part of legal tradition in Buddhist societies. A version appears in the *Phra thammawat* at the head of the Three Seals Code, and probably originated from Burma as a very similar passage appears in the *Manusāra dhammasattha*, a Burmese text compiled in 1651/2.⁵ In both the Thai and Burmese versions, the passage ends with a distinctive curse for a bad judge, who after death will “go to burn in the realms of loss and woe to suffer for a long time as a *pret* (suffering ghost), with fingernails as big as hoe blades, licked by blazing flames, scooping out their own blood and flesh to eat as food.”⁶ The sermon on the four wrong courses in the *Phra thammawat* in the *Three Seals Law* is short, only about twenty lines. The *Tenets* is much more elaborate, indeed roughly the same length as the whole *Phra thammawat*.

Following this discourse on the four wrong courses, Indra instructs the sojourner on the mental disciplines for achieving a fair judgement within the framework of a court system which allows plaintiff and defendant to argue their conflicting cases and to call on witnesses whose testimony must be evaluated. These instructions dramatize this mental process by using a series of striking similes and metaphors. The judge is urged to conceptualize a court case in all its complexity as a great tree with many components; to pursue the truth like a hunter following a trail of blood to find a wounded deer; to identify the key points of a case like a hawk spotting a fish in the ocean; to use the written law as the bedrock, the *Phra thammawat* as his eyes and the *Tenets* as a mirror to reach the final judgement; and to deliver the judgement with total authority like a lord of the lions who “stands in front of the crystal cave, looks around in all directions, . . . stretches his body, shakes the fur at his throat, and speaks very loudly in the voice of a lion, making animals bow in submission.”⁷

From the late 19th century, the *Three Seals Law* was superseded by the modern law codes and legislation, but was never formally repealed. Several legal authorities, including Pridi Banomyong, have argued that those parts of the *Three Seals Law* which have not been overridden by new legislation and are not in conflict with later legislation are technically still in force. This point was argued in the plaint of a case submitted to the Supreme Court in 1978, specifically citing *Tenets* as a law that remains in force.⁸

The *Tenets* prescribe no immediate punishments for judges failing to avoid the four wrong courses. Unlike the version in the *Phra thammawat*, it makes no specific

⁵ Lammerts (n 2) 118.

⁶ Clause 5 in the *Phra thammawat* of the Three Seals Law; compare D. Christian Lammerts, “Buddhism and Written Law: Dhammasattha Manuscripts and Texts in Premodern Burma” (PhD dissertation, Cornell University 2010) 462–65.

⁷ The hunter following a trail of blood appears in the Laws of Manu; Olivelle, *Manu’s Code of Law* (n 1) 169; Doniger and Smith, *The Laws of Manu* (n 1) 143; but not the other metaphors.

⁸ ณัฐพล นันธมานพ ประชุมญาติ, หลักอรรถาธิบายในกฎหมายตราสามดวง และสภาพบังคับของกฎหมายตราสามดวงในปัจจุบัน (ศูนย์บริการข้อมูลด้านกฎหมายและหน่วยงานนิติสภา, 2556) [Natthaphon Nanthamanop Prachumyat, “The Tenets Spoken by Indra in the Three Seals Law and the Enforceability of the Three Seals Law in the Present Day” (*Law Data Centre, Senate of Thailand*, 2013)] <https://www.senate.go.th/assets/portals/93/fileups/272/files/S%E0%B9%88ub_Jun/3journal/b43%20jun_2_5.pdf> (Thai).

curse on the consequences in future lives, but states that a bad judge is more deserving of retribution than someone with “the sin of killing a thousand women who have done no wrong, or killing up to a thousand brahmans who lived chaste lives, or killing a thousand elephants or cattle.” Those judges who decided some recent politically related cases might worry about their future lives.

II. TRANSLATION⁹

1

*natvā jināhaṃ pavaraṃ munindaṃ
dhammañca saṃghaṃ vara atthasādhamaṃ
vakkhāmi seṭṭhaṃ vara indabhāsaṃ
paramparābhattachānusāraṃ*

Your humble servant pays respect to the Lord Buddha, the Conqueror of the five demons,¹⁰ such as the demon-deities,¹¹ who is a learned being greater than all learned ones, excellent, with a disposition full of more moral virtue than [any in] the three worlds. But I do not honor the Lord Buddha alone. I have paid respect to the nine supermundane states, ten along with the holy Pariyatti. But I do not honor the holy Dhamma alone. I have already paid respect to the holy noble Sangha, that has achieved such excellent benefit. Now I will explain the manual with the title the Sayings of Indra,¹² which is excellent, that recalls the words that teachers have passed down to be of value for people who are judges.

2

The content of the Sayings of Indra follows the explanation inscribed by ancient teachers that, as is known, there is a celestial palace established at the level of the Four

⁹ This translation is based on the facsimile of the 1805 text and transcription in กฎหมายตราสามดวง ฉบับราชบัณฑิตยสถาน (ราชบัณฑิตยสถาน 2550) เล่ม 1 [Three Seals Law Royal Society Edition (Royal Society 2007)] (Thai) Vol 1, 167–207; กฎหมายตราสามดวง พระธรรมสาตราหลักอินทภาษ (ราชบัณฑิตยสถาน 2558) [Three Seals Law: Phra Thammasat and the Tenets Spoken by Indra (Royal Society 2015)] (Thai) 135–99. The clause numbers do not appear in the original manuscript; they were added in the printed editions. In the passages translated from Pali, the original has Pali words interleaved *nissaya*-style; these have been omitted from the translation.

¹⁰ มารทั้ง ๕, *man thang* 5. Man māra are malevolent divinities, including the demon who tried to prevent Gautama Buddha from attaining liberation from the cycle of rebirth on the night of the Buddha’s enlightenment, and also forces that impede humans achieving enlightenment, and bring about their death.

¹¹ เทวบุตรมาระ, *thevabut mara*, devaputta māra; “son of a god, a demi-god, a ministering god . . . usually of Yakkhas” (Pali Text Society dictionary).

¹² The text sometimes has หลักอินทภาษ, *lak inthaphat*, “tenets Indra speaks,” translated as in the title, and sometimes, as here, only อินทภาษ, *inthaphat*, “Indra speaks.”

Great Kings,¹³ [guardian] gods of the world. It is a sky palace.¹⁴ And this palace is adorned with gold and celestial gems, has a thousand spires, and is embellished with a sculpted baldachin, gemmed gable trims, golden porticos, and roof pinnacles. There is a golden raised gallery with a row of golden pillars with molded gilded capitals, shining bright and brilliant with the light of the seven jewels; and not only that, resounding with the tinkling of bells with clappers of pure gold.

This palace is filled with ten thousand youthful celestial *apsara* maidens of exquisite beauty with bodies adorned with celestial ornaments and ornate breast chains, some reciting verses back and forth and playing music loudly, never quiet at any time. The celestial palace is also beautiful for its lotus pond with a current of pleasing pure water, strewn with the five kinds of lotus in bloom with stems, flowers, and pollen falling and perfuming the water. Around the banks of the pond, there are many species of charming young trees arranged in rows with pretty leaves, branches, twigs, and shoots, bending in the wind, opening in blooms, whose petals and pollen spread a celestial floral aroma in the areas surrounding the celestial palace, attractive to be viewed and enjoyed. This palace has no supreme male deity as its head enjoying its matchless treasures.

There came a time when Lord Amarin [Indra], king of the gods, was seated on his Banthu-kamphon-sila throne¹⁵ under the shelter of celestial Parikachat trees, surrounded by attendant gods and deities amassed around the area. Lord Amarin looked across the sky and saw that palace shining brilliantly like the divine moon. So he gave a divine command to the gathered deities: “Listen, all of you, persons devoid of suffering, look at that palace there with the bright aura of great beauty.”

At that time among all the deities there was a deity, whose name does not appear, who raised his arms, paid respect, and said: “I, servant of the lord of the gods in two levels of the heavens, to my mind I wish to have that celestial palace. How can I get that palace there? Please let me succeed in my wish, O lord.”

Lord Amarin then gave a divine command: “Listen, deity, if you wish to have that palace, go to be born in the human world as someone commanding the affairs of the humans, women and men, to be honest, moral, and just, doing no wrong at any time. Then when you pass away from that life as a human, you will have that palace there, truly fulfilling your desire.”

When he heard this divine command, the deity was overjoyed that when his merit was exhausted, he would lose his life and body in the divine form. He accepted the divine command, saying: “It is good.” He paid respect, left, and came to his divine

¹³ จตุ มหาราชิกะ, *chatumaharachika*, catumahārājika, the first of six levels of heaven in the Three Worlds cosmology, abode of the guardian gods of the four directions.

¹⁴ อากาศวิมาน, *ākāsa vimāna*; a *vimāna* is a “heavenly (magic) palace, a kind of paradise, Elysium” (Pali Text Society dictionary), sometimes translated as “heavenly abode” or “divine mansion.” The description here draws on *Vimānavatthu*, a section of the *Khuddaka Nikaya* with eighty-three stories about residents of these abodes; see Peter Masefield (tr), *Vimana Stories: Elucidation of the Intrinsic Meaning so Named the Commentary on the Vimana Stories* (Pali Text Society 1989).

¹⁵ Frank E. Reynolds and Mani B. Reynolds (trs and eds), *Three Worlds According to King Ruang: A Thai Buddhist Cosmology* (University of California Press 1982) 233.

residence. Surrounded by his retinue of divine sons and daughters, he went to the park. His crowd of divine retainers and ladies gave service so that he was amazed with various divine feelings. This deity then passed down and took birth linkage in the womb of the wife of a certain great courtier, who was a judge of court cases in the city of Varanasi. At the completion of ten months, he was born from the mother's womb. He gradually grew up and developed to be clever and learned on cause and not-cause. When his father reached old age, he took his father's place, overseeing cases for the populace with unwavering justice.

After a time, this courtier wondered: how do I judge cases for the populace to conform purely to justice and honesty according to the *phra ratchasat thammawat*?¹⁶ What dhamma do I have as rules for deciding court cases which the learned brahmins, great courtiers, and judges of cases from before will see as my good practice?

3

While the courtier was pondering with concern over this, it caused the mind of Lord Amarin, king of kings, to recall this deity who had passed down. Hence he examined with his celestial sight, and knew that he had gone down to be the son of a great courtier, was judging cases for the populace, and now wished to have an excellent Path of Dhamma¹⁷ to be a principle inspiring his mind to judge cases with pure justice. "Hence I should go down to help improve his mind to have the confidence and expertise in the dhamma of a moral person, to have a nature like a celestial gem that is pure and steadfast, and to have him examine cases with the excellent principle of neutrality."

With this thought, he left the Vejayanta celestial palace,¹⁸ descended, stood in front of the great courtier in the form of a human, and gave a divine command: "Listen, human, sir, you wish to have a Path of Dhamma that is correct like a pillar planted to be a rule for those who will judge cases for the populace henceforth into the future. I am happy to come at this moment, desiring to help you to achieve the Path of Dhamma that is correct as principles inspiring judges not to deviate into the way of wrong courses."

When Lord Amarin gave that divine order, the great courtier's son listened to the sweet, melodious sound, examined [the speaker's] appearance and found it strange—the eyes did not blink, the body cast no shadow like a human—and so understood through his wisdom that this person was not human and perhaps was truly a god of great power. So he asked in reply: "Sir, you have come with the grace to help

¹⁶ พระราชสาตราธรรมนูญ, Skt: rājaśāstra dharmaśāstra. In this context, the phrase probably means something like "all kinds of law, royal and customary." Below, the phrase appears repeatedly as "*thammawat ratchasat*." Towards the end of the work, there is the form คัมภีร์ธรรมนูญ, *khamphi phra thammawat*, referring to a text.

¹⁷ คลองธรรม, *khlongtham*.

¹⁸ Indra's palace in the Tāvātīsa heaven.

me compose principles, namely the dhamma that is four-square for the world. I am very pleased. Let me ask you in bold words lacking in restraint: of what kind of birth are you?” Then came a divine command: “Listen, human, I am Amarin, king of the gods, supreme in two levels of the heavens. I have come down hoping to put my name to this mass of dhamma so it will be named as the Tenets Spoken by Indra, appearing in all eras.”

After this divine command, Amarin proclaimed to the gathered deities in a loud voice: “Listen, O gods, come to gather here and watch me establish a Path of Dhamma that is pure to be principles for judges on cases for all humans.”

At that moment, the voice of Lord Amarin, king of the gods, carried to be heard in all ten thousand universes. The gods all came to assemble. At this gathering, the body of Lord Amarin was not visible to humans. Then the Thousand-Eyed Lord,¹⁹ king of the gods, gave a divine order spoken to the great courtier's son: “Listen, human, as people seek a Path of Dhamma to be a four-square principle to inspire the minds of judges who decide cases for human people, to be pure, not having a mass of incorrect karma instilled in their nature; to have the mental intention to study the teachings that I will state here, to establish them in their nature, not to be forgotten, to serve as principles to uphold in order to proceed without error.”

When the lord king of the gods gave the dhamma to be the principle for judges, he spoke the verses that follow here.

4

*chandā dosā bhayā mohā yo dhammaṃ nātivattati
abhivaḍḍhati tassa yaso sukkapakkhe va candimā
chandā dosā bhayā mohā yo dhammaṃ ativattati
nihiyati tassa yaso kālapakkhe va candimā
evampi poso agatiṃ gacchanto
saniggaho so ayaso alābho
tasmā viniccheyya dhiro sapañño
kāreyya senassa padā va aṭṭaṃ
gaṇheyya macchaṃ va samudda majjhe
ādā minantaṃ atire va daḷhaṃ*

In that divine advice, it was stated: “Listen, humans, those who will be judges deciding on cases for humans, let them not violate the correct dhamma of a moral person for reasons of desire, anger, fear, or delusion, then the rank and retinue of that person will flourish further like the moon that increases in the waxing phase; while any person who violates, that is, breaks the correct dhamma of a moral person for reasons of

¹⁹ ท้าวสหัสสนัย, *thao sahatsanai*, sahassa nayana; an epithet of Indra.

desire, anger, fear, or delusion, then the rank and retinue of that person will decline and disappear like the moon that decreases and hides away in the waning phase.”

The divine advice stated: “Any person who will be a judge on cases for humans should ensure their nature is without the four wrong courses, namely 1. desire, 2. anger, 3. fear, and 4. delusion; these four are incorrect dhamma that is not clean, not of a moral person. And for what reason are these four dhamma called wrong courses? A wrong course means not the way of a moral person. Wise people should avoid these four dhamma of desire, anger, fear, and delusion, should not take this way. Desire can be both ways depending on the situation, can be a wholesome or unwholesome mental state, but when it forms a wrong course, desire is truly an unwholesome mental state. Anger, fear, and delusion, these three, are also unwholesome mental states.

“To have those who judge be devoid of desire means making their mind devoid of desire, not looking for possessions and worldly gains, not siding with the plaintiff or defendant in order to have animate property or inanimate property, making their mind to be four-square, straight, a middle way, like a pair of scales²⁰ raised up high, not bullying the plaintiff and praising the defendant, or praising the plaintiff and bullying the defendant, to make one side lose to the other through use of their [judge’s] power. Even if a party to the case is a relative, such as their own father or mother, they do not allow the power of desire to interfere, as should not be, but set their mind to be neutral, which is considered the condition for honest judgement, being even like a pair of scales, examining and questioning according to the *thammasat ratchasat* that former scholars and kings from times past laid down, so [judges] do not make mistakes. The judge or magistrate who follows the Path of Dhamma as explained here is considered to be devoid of desire, which is the first of the wrong courses.

“To have judges and magistrates be devoid of anger means making their mind even, not questioning under the influence of anger, revenge, retaliation, saying that this person is an enemy, hostile to themselves, not acting from anger and vengefulness from the beginning, examining [a case] to force [that person] to lose. Even though the plaintiff or defendant was their enemy at odds with them at some time in the past, they do not allow their mind to come under the influence of anger, but follow the *thammasat ratchasat*, set their mind in the middle, constantly neutral, thus examining and deciding [the case] on the middle path, not making either the plaintiff or defendant win or lose through the influence of their own anger or vengefulness. When a magistrate or judge has conducted themselves as stated here, this judge or magistrate is considered devoid of anger, not following the second of the wrong courses.

“To have magistrates and judges be devoid of fear means making their minds secure, not wavering from fear of the plaintiff or defendant, not being startled, scared, or shivering because this person is a big person with rank and title, or is of royal lineage, or from a very big clan, and if they lose in the judgement this time (which they should), they will make the judge face disaster of some sort for sure. In addition, the

²⁰ ตราชู, *trachu*, from Persian *tarāzū*.

judge should not fear that this person has knowledge of magical lore,²¹ or skills, or bodily strength, so if their side loses, they will be angry, and will do some harm to the judge for arranging for them to lose in a situation where they should lose. The judge should make up their mind to be bold, not wavering out of fear of the lineage of a big person for some reason or other. They should hold to the principle of honesty and follow the *thammasat ratchasat* as the rule, and not let people who are sages with insight criticize them for being misguided. Even though the party to a case is of solar lineage with high rank and title of some kind, they should not reverse the case from lose to win under the influence of fear. A judge or magistrate who has conducted themselves as stated here is considered as a judge or magistrate devoid of fear, not following the third of the wrong courses.

“To have them devoid of delusion. The mental state of delusion means ignorance, being in the dark throughout, not knowing about the amount of suffering, the origin of suffering, the elimination of suffering, or the way to eliminate suffering. Worldly matters explain this delusion. If there is much delusion in someone’s nature, it makes them lost in murky darkness, not knowing sin from merit, good from bad, utility from non-utility, wrong from right. They are always cloaked in the darkness of delusion. This is the nature of delusion. Judges and magistrates should avoid this delusion, purge it from their nature. To judge cases for the populace, they should examine with methods that are learned and pure, with no contamination of dishonesty. In any case, they should examine with wisdom to see who should lose, and investigate to see with wisdom truly who should win, and not make a decision based on delusion that is dark and misguided. If the case is beyond their wisdom, they should ask scholars, palace officials, and courtiers, people who have wisdom and expertise in royal rulings, and who have judged cases in the past. They must not overestimate their own abilities, which is a delusion of being carried away, but should hold fast to the principle of correct practice, be ashamed and fearful of sin, follow the *thammasat ratchasat*, not reverse a case from lose to win or from win to lose through the influence of delusion, that is, being carried away. If any judge or magistrate can conduct themselves as stated here, that magistrate will be considered to be devoid of delusion, not following the fourth of the wrong courses.

“Any palace official or courtier who avoids all four of these wrong courses in their nature, the rank and retinue of that palace official or courtier will flourish to become more splendid, like the moon that shines brightly in the sky in the waxing phase.”

When Lord Amarin spoke explaining the Path of Dhamma about the incorrect side of people who follow the wrong courses ever more and more, he said: “Listen, humans. People following the wrong course of desire means those who examine cases under the influence of greed, are intent on possessions and worldly gain, are happy about bribes and inducements, and side with the plaintiff or defendant in order to get animate or inanimate property. If any party to a case offers them a bribe, though that

²¹ วิทย์าคม, *withayakhom*, vijja/vidya āgama, knowledge + that which is passed down, meaning a text; a general term for magic or supernatural practices.

party should lose the case, they are not ashamed of sin, turn away from the correct dhamma, oppress the party which does not offer a bribe, reverse the case from win to lose, from lose to win, not following the *thammasat ratchasat*. This is considered following the wrong course of desire, the first of the wrong courses.

“Conduct under the wrong course of anger means someone who is overcome by rage, and who examines cases distracted by the influence of anger of an evil kind. If any party to a case had wronged them in the past, even though that person should win, they force them to lose under the influence of vengefulness, without shame or fear of sin, violating the ancient *ratchanitisat*²² as the standard, acting under the influence of a mind of anger. This is considered following the wrong course of anger, acting according to the second of the wrong courses.

“People being under the wrong course of fear means they examine cases with a mind agitated by fear, afraid of the plaintiff or defendant. If any party to a case is a big person with rank and title, or someone with knowledge of magical lore, bodily strength, or fighting skills, they are so scared and terrified that, though this party should lose the case, they oppress the person of little rank, or person with no magical lore or bodily strength, who should win the case, and make them instead sadly lose to the person of rank, not following the *thammasat ratchasat* as principle, acting under the influence of fear. This is called conduct by the wrong course of fear, the third of the wrong courses.

“People being under the wrong course of delusion means they examine cases primarily with delusion and obsession, with only darkness and confusion dominating all around, not knowing sin from merit, good from bad, utility from non-utility. They do not know thoroughly the *thammasat ratchasat* and *ratchaniti* of any case. When judging, who will win and who will lose is not known, is dictated by the influence of delusion, meaning ignorance, changing lose to win, win to lose. They are not interested in bribes, not fearful of anyone, and not angry at anyone, but act under the influence of obsession. This is considered conduct by the wrong course of delusion, the fourth of the wrong courses.

“The dhamma stated here is called dark dhamma.²³ A clean person should not adopt this. If anyone habitually and continually behaves thus at all times, the rank and retinue of that person will decline and disappear like the moon in the waning phase, and when that person passes away, they will go to suffer severely in hell with no opportunity for happiness.

“Listen, humans, when someone follows the wrong courses in ways described here, that person is condemned, that is, they are criticized by people of wisdom, are seen to be devoid of rank or wealth in the present day, and when passing away, will only go to suffer hardship in hell for the future. For these reasons, someone who is a

²² ราชนิติศาสตร์, *rāja nīti śāstra/sattha*, king-conduct/law-study/science. Nowadays, *niti* means law. In Pali, it means “guidance, practice, conduct, esp. right conduct, propriety; statesmanship, polity” (Pali Text Society dictionary). In the Three Seals Law, it appears only three times, twice here, once in the *Phra thammasat*, always as *ratchaniti*, which seems to be one of several terms for a royal ruling.

²³ กัณหาธรรม, *kanhatham*, *kanha dhamma*.

sage with the resolution and great wisdom to be a judge or magistrate should avoid the four wrong courses, purge them from their nature, and should decide cases for the populace by the Path of Dhamma, following the *thammasat ratchasat*.”

5

When Lord Amarín explained that the punishment for people who administered cases incorrectly was heavy consequences in the future, he spoke these verses:

*yo khattiyo cepī mahāpuriso
iddhānubhāvo varatejavanto
saddho pasanno varasāsanamhi
kāreti sovaṇṇamaye ca thūpe
jambūdīpasmim sakale pratrime
vajjiravarena ca maṇḍite te
vasūhi pūje vividhehi satta
saddho nikaṃkho bahukāri dhamme
nānappakārena dadāti dānaṃ
puññābhisandaṃ pana appameyyaṃ
na makkhi pāpaṃ agatī jātaṃ
honti nārisahassāni honti brāhmasatāni ca
hatthi gavasahassāni na samaṃ tassa passati*

The translation from the Pali is as follows. “Listen, humans. Any person, even a great person,²⁴ as high as a great king with sacred power, great authority, and a nature of devotion to the excellent religion of the Buddha, who has had holy golden stupas made in row after adjacent row in all Jambudīpa, and has created great holy bejeweled [Buddha] images adorned with gems installed inside the stupas, and made worship with the seven gems of different types, and has a royal heart devoid of doubt about [accumulating merit from] wholesome actions, gives alms of various kinds, from which the beneficial results flow down as merit that the king has made, which cannot be counted or estimated, [and which] should not be overshadowed by the heap of sin and karma which arises from administering cases not straight as a result of the four wrong courses. In addition, if any person has the sin of killing a thousand women who have done no wrong, or killing up to a thousand brahmans who lived chaste lives, or killing a thousand elephants or cattle, and the heap of sin and karma is heavy, even so, this is not equal to the sin and karma of someone who administers cases not completely straight.

²⁴ มหาบุรุษ, *mahaburūt*, mahāpurisa, a bodhisatta.

6

“For that reason, sages who possess wisdom and insight should avoid the way of wrong courses which we have explained here already, should look at the *ratchasat* which are verdicts of great courtiers from the past, think straight with methods that are clever, and establish rules for deciding cases thereafter, with explanations for those examining cases for the populace. When the plaintiff and defendant are together, let the magistrate take the *Phra thammāsāt*, which the courtier Manosāra brought from the Cakkavāḷa Mountains,²⁵ to act as a mirror. When examining [the case] they should set their mind to be merciful towards both parties to the case equally like a father looking at his own children. They should think about the Tenets Spoken by Indra in place of their eyes, then compare the statements of the plaintiff and defendant, whether wrong or right. If the plaintiff and defendant are people much given to delusion, do not know right from wrong, good from bad, and are not able to come to an agreement, then give authority to the examiner to question the defendant about the accusation, and interrogate the plaintiff and defendant to see both sides of the case.

“Then question the defendant about the accusations which the defendant does not accept; and if the defendant still does not accept, go back and question the plaintiff, [who will] call for the testimony of witnesses, or proceed to an ordeal. Then after questioning, let the examiner identify the points at issue on both sides according to the *Phra thammāsāt*. [If] the plaintiff’s accusations and the defendant’s responses to the accusations are agreed between them, the plaintiff and defendant, then the case can proceed. If the plaintiff’s accusations and the defendant’s testimony are not agreed, and the plaintiff and defendant call [witnesses], bring the words of the witnesses under questioning on every point to include in the court proceeding. If the plaintiff’s accusations and the defendant’s testimony are not agreed between them, do not yet proceed to an ordeal of the plaintiff and defendant. When questioning the witnesses, have the examiner swear in the witnesses using an oath specifically to the Three Jewels following the manual, *Phra thammāsāt*.²⁶ Then closely examine the truth and untruth of the plaintiff and defendant like a deer hunter who shoots a deer. There is Pali:

*yathā pi sallena miggo ca viddho
 palāyito nilliyi kānanasmim
 luddho ca lohitamanuggamento
 evam pi aṭṭādhikāraṃ nisamme
 vākyānusārena padhārayanto
 aṭṭāvicāro varapekkhadhiro*

²⁵ เขาชักรวาท, *khao chakrawan*, cakkavāḷa, the mountains that form the border of the universe. See *Phra thammāsāt* cl 4 on Manosāra.

²⁶ คัมภีร์พระธรรมศาสตร์, *khamphi phra thammāsāt*; here and below the reference to *Phra thammāsāt* is clearly to a text.

*haṇḍaṃ karonto vūpasantaruddho
yutto same ve visame vivajje*

“The content of the Pali says: When a hunter sees a deer,²⁷ looses an arrow and hits the deer, sometimes he hits a vital spot and [the deer] dies right there, sometimes he does not hit a vital spot and the deer runs off and hides in the forest. The hunter follows the tracks and the trail of drops of blood to the end of the tracks and of the trail of blood and finds the deer he shot there in difficulty. There is a simile here. Let the magistrate set their mind intent on examining correctly following the main points of the case to bring out the untruth and truth correctly. If they find the truth or untruth from the charges of the plaintiff, the testimony of the defendant, and the testimony of the witnesses, then write up the court proceeding and present it to the judges.

“If examining the court proceeding, the truth or untruth is not yet found, reexamine the main points of the plaintiff and defendant to undo the knots in the flow of the case and have the truth or untruth for sure, like the hunter following the deer and finding the deer; then in the court proceeding arrange the words of the plaintiff and defendant and the testimony of witnesses and present it to the judges. If the judges think that they cannot yet deliver a firm verdict, then have the plaintiff and defendant contest an ordeal against each other.

7

“In addition. A courtier who is a judge deciding on a case should scrutinize the statements of the plaintiff and defendant in detail to know the accusations and the evidence, the points which are suspect, the points which are not suspect, the points which are core, and the points which are subsidiary. If core points are suspect, and the court proceeding as it exists is not truly clear, then there should be further interrogation and questioning again and again to get the truth into the court proceeding.

8

“In addition. Scrutinize the words of the witnesses: do they touch on the root of the case, on the points of the accusation, or do they not; those that do touch, are they suspect or not; are the witnesses heavenly, superior, or abnormal;²⁸ are the witnesses obstructive. Have the judge revise [the court proceeding] to be correct according to the manual, *Phra thammāsāt*.

²⁷ เนื้อ, *nuea*, *migga* in Pali, which in both languages can mean either a deer or any four-legged animal that is hunted.

²⁸ ทิพ อุตร อุตฺติ, *thip udon utari*; three grades of witnesses described in the Three Seals Laws, *Witnesses*, cls 1–3.

9

“In addition. Let the judge take the plaintiff’s accusation and the defendant’s testimony as the site of a tree. Let the points which are agreed in the court proceeding be the roots; the points that are not agreed and which are core to the case of the plaintiff and defendant be the main forks of the branches; the points that are not agreed and are subsidiary to the case of the plaintiff and defendant be the little branches and twigs. Take the witness testimonies that are relevant to the root of the case as the trunk; take the details in the court proceeding as the leaves; take statements that are one-sided and stuffed in the record, deserving of further cross-examination, as the bark; take statements that are one-sided and irrelevant, not deserving further examination, as parasites;²⁹ and [take] the claims that are not agreed by the plaintiff and defendant, which are to be decided by ordeal, as wood that is rotten and falling off. If the record is still not clear and the judges cannot investigate further to find the truth, then proceed to an ordeal between them.

10

“In addition. Let the courtier who is the judge study the statements of the plaintiff and defendant to see clearly the points lost and points won, and then deliver a verdict on this case, like the situation of a hawk. The hawk flies in the sky, looking for fish in the ocean. When the eyes of the hawk spot a fish swimming, the hawk swoops down, snaps up the fish in its claws, and consumes it as food. This is a simile for a judge who looks at the main points of the case—which lose, which win—intent on being truly precise in his mind, and who grasps the main points for making the verdict. On those points which are only a leaf, twig, branch or parasite, let the judge cut them away and chop into pieces, then grasp and hold only the trunk and the taproot, and decide the case finally, kill it dead.

11

“In addition. Let the judge hold a crystal mirror, that is, these Tenets Spoken by Indra; bring the *Phra thammawat* to be their eyes, left and right; and take the royal enactments as Mount Meru, the secure royal pillar of the world. To have a bold mind, [let the judge] act like the royal lord of the lions going outside the golden cave. By his nature, when going outside, the lord of the lions stands in front of the crystal cave, looks around in all directions, great and small, stretches his body, shakes the fur at his throat, and speaks out very loudly in the voice of a lion, making animals bow in submission, then he leaps and bounds to catch animals as his food, using his power.

²⁹ กาฝาก, *kafak*, parasitic plants, especially creepers in the Loranthaceae, Santalaceae and Viscaceae families.

“There is also a simile with the courtier taking a decision, who looks at all the words in the court proceeding, pulls out the core, identifies the points that are suspect as stain, blackening the plaintiff or defendant, relies on Mount Meru, namely the royal enactments, then makes a judgement on the truth and untruth of the plaintiff and defendant to appear clearly for everyone to see the right and wrong through the court proceeding, who should pay compensation and royal dues, and what level of punishment should be imposed on the wrongdoer, and gives a firm definite verdict like the voice of a lord of the lions, to decide the case by the *Phra thammawat*.

12

“When palace officials and courtiers conduct themselves according to the Path of Dhamma, purge the four wrong courses such as desire completely, and administer cases in the direction that we stated here, then the benefit and well-being of the people [will improve], and the rank, retinue, and title of that palace official will flourish and increase like the moon in the waxing phase of fifteen days.

“Listen, humans. Because the four points of dhamma, for example, that palace officials and courtiers avoid desire, as explained at the beginning with the exposition set out here, are considered excellent tenets for judges and magistrates, and as our name is Indra, all the words of ours spoken here are together called the Tenets Spoken by Indra. May they prosper and remain forever through all eras.”

13

When the human son of a great courtier had heard the divine god speaking, he was very happy, so he raised his hands and paid respect to receive the divine advice with honesty and loyalty. Lord Amarin proceeded to his divine abode in the heavenly realm at the Vejayanta celestial palace, to enjoy the treasure of a hundred thousand heavenly ladies and retainers with great pleasure. The son of the great courtier upheld the divine advice on judging and administering cases for the populace with justice, followed the orders that the Thousand-Eyed gave without fail until the age of passing away. Through the power and fruit of honestly and straightforwardly administering cases, and the fruit of almsgiving and various good works, he was born in that heavenly jeweled golden palace, joyous with the eight great celestial senses—shape, taste, smell, sound, touch—which were plentiful, exquisite, and enjoyable, fulfilling his desires during his birth as a deity.