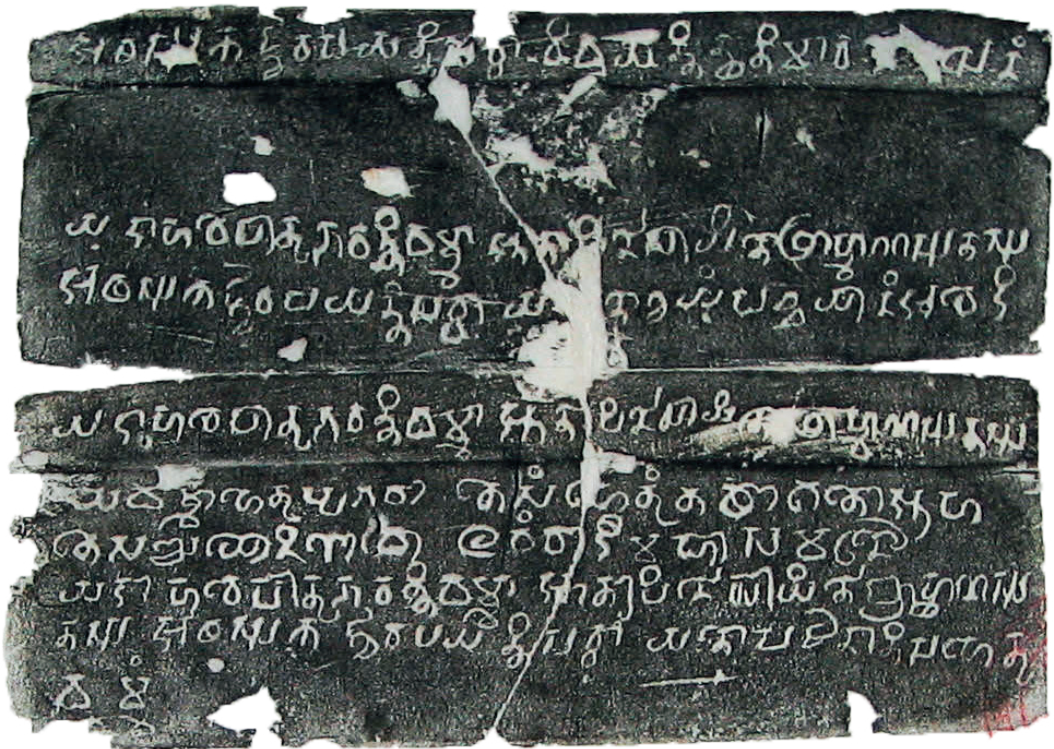


The Theravaṃsa Has Always Been Here: K. 1355 from Angkor Borei

Peter Skilling

Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

ABSTRACT—A neatly lettered Pali inscription from Angkor Borei gives the *ye dhammā* stanza followed by verses spoken by Gotama Buddha just after his awakening. It adds to the corpus of Pali citation inscriptions of Southeast Asia and to the small corpus of early Middle-Indic inscriptions of ancient Cambodia.



Estampage of Angkor Borei Pali inscription. (Photo courtesy of EFEO, Cambodia)

Script	Cursive Southeast Asian Brahmi ¹
Language	Pali
Date	12th to 13th centuries BE /7th to 8th century CE ²
Support	Baked clay tablet
Sides/Lines	5 lines on main face; 1 line on lateral side 1; 2 lines on reverse; 1 line on lateral side 2
Dimensions	18 x 5 x 1.5 cm
Date of entry to Museum	31 March 2004 (presented by Dr. M. Tranet)
Place of discovery	Kompong Pou village, Prek Phtoul commune, Angkor Borei district, Cambodia ³
Present location	Phnom Penh National Museum (Reserve collection)
Photos	National Museum of Cambodia and EFEO (NMC/EFEO)
Publication history	Skilling, ‘Some Citation Inscriptions from South-East Asia’ (2002) ⁴

This inscription is reported to be from Angkor Borei in southern Cambodia, a site that many would identify as the capital of the ancient kingdom of Funan. At any rate, the small object comes from an ancient landscape where finds of numerous antiquities bespeak a thriving culture. The tablet is engraved on the four faces of a rectangular clay slab – both on the broad flat obverse and reverse and on each of the two narrow edges or sides. The inscription is well preserved, and despite a break that runs through the centre, it is generally legible. Long vowels, *niggahīta*, and conjunct consonants are all clearly marked; some of the letters are peculiar and await a detailed palaeographical study. There is no context, beyond that the tablet was discovered with fragments of a Buddha image, which can no longer be traced.⁵ The tablet may have been meant to be installed in a stūpa, the foundation of a building, or a Buddha image; these, at least, are the usual functions of such verses. The inscription is undated; on palaeographic grounds it may belong to the 12th or 13th centuries BE (7th or 8th centuries CE).

The language of the inscription is Pali. In 1936, in an article entitled ‘The Oldest Pali Inscription of Cambodia’, French savant George Cœdès had proclaimed the earliest Pali epigraph known from Cambodia to be K. 754.⁶ This is a record of a donation made

¹ In Thai epigraphy generally known as ‘Pallava’ อักษรปัลลวะ or ‘post-Pallava’ อักษรหลังปัลลวะ.

² I give dates first in the (Thai) Buddhist Era (BE) followed by the Christian Era (CE).

³ Details from M. Tranet, reported to B. Porte, EFEO/Phnom Penh National Museum, 23 March 2017. The use of different numbering systems for Cambodian inscriptions by different individuals or organisations has been a source of needless confusion. M. Tranet assigned the number *ka.* 56 to the present inscription; the museum record is *ka.* 4118. For an international readership, I prefer to use the EFEO number, K. 1355, so that the inscription is placed with the broader EFEO corpus of inscriptions of Cambodia.

⁴ The first publication was based on a copy of an *estampage* kindly made available by M. Tranet (then Secretary of State at the Ministry of Culture, Kingdom of Cambodia) through the good offices of Dr. Olivier de Bernon (École française d’Extrême-Orient, Phnom Penh). In 2016, I received the photographs and *estampage* published here, courtesy of Dominique Soutif.

⁵ Information from M. Tranet, 28 March, 2017, courtesy of B. Porte.

⁶ Cœdès, ‘La plus ancienne inscription en pâli du Cambodge’ (1936). One other epigraph, that for long

by Śrīndravarman (Pali: Sirisirindavamma) in Śaka era 1230 (1308 CE), from Kok Svay Cek, south of the Western Baray near Angkor Wat. Śrīndravarman's record, inscribed on a stone stele 1.70 m in height, is bilingual. One side has twenty lines of Pali verse in ten ślokas; the other has thirty-one lines of Khmer prose.⁷ The Angkor Borei tablet is centuries older, but even if it means that K. 754 loses its erstwhile status as the 'oldest Pali inscription of Cambodia' overnight, K. 754 is still the earliest Pali-Khmer *bilingual* and, given that the undated Angkor Borei inscription is a *citation* from classical or canonical literature, it is still the earliest *dated Pali composition* from Cambodia. One other Pali composition, in five verses, from Prasat Kralan (K. 501), bears a date, but the reading is not certain; on the basis of palaeography, it might date to the early 14th century.⁸ That is, K. 754 and K. 501 are broadly contemporaneous. The next dated Pali inscription, also a composition, is that from Vat Nokor (K. 82), dated Śaka 1488 (1566 CE).

Text⁹



Figure 1. Angkor Borei Pali inscription, Face 1. (Photos courtesy of National Museum of Cambodia and EFEO)

Face 1

- [1] yedhammāhetuppabhavā tesamhetumtathāgatoāha
- [2] tesañcayonirodho evaṃvādīmahāsamaṇo
- [3] yadā havepātubhavanti dhammā ātāpinojhāyinobrāhmaṇassa
- [4] *nassa*¹⁰ athassakañkhāvapayantisavvā yatopajānātisahetu
- [5] dhammaṃ

was thought to be in Pali, is the inscription from Phreah Khan of Kompong Svay (K. 888) in the National Museum, Phnom Penh. It is, however, a Sanskrit verse from the oeuvre of the celebrated Indian Buddhist poet, Mātṛceṭa: see Skilling, 'Namo Buddhāya Gurave (K. 888)'.

⁷ 'Bilingual' here means in the two languages, Pali and Khmer. The inscription announces the donation of a *vihāra*, a Buddha image, and other offerings. The two records are parallel, but not identical, and the Khmer portion gives a more detailed account of the offerings.

⁸ Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* III, pp. 85–88.

⁹ The faces are not numbered. It makes sense, however, that the text starts with the *ye dhammā* verse and then follows the sequence of the *yadā have* verses in the canonical Pali texts. I transcribe the Pali as it is, without word breaks, except that I reproduce the small single space given between the lines of the verses.

¹⁰ In each case, after the half-verse ending with *brāhmaṇassa*, there follow two letters which appear to read *nassa*, in my transliteration set in italic typeface. It is as if the retroflex *-ṇassa* is followed each time by a dental *-nassa*. This is a mystery that I cannot explain.

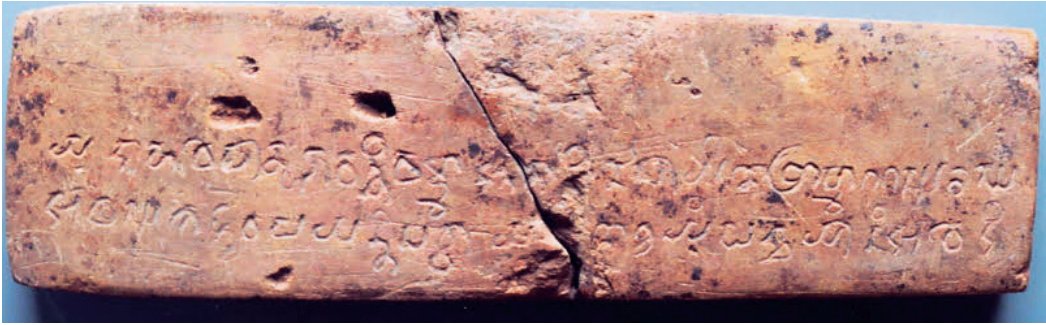


Figure 2. Angkor Borei Pali inscription, Face 2.

Face 2

- [1] yadāhavepātubhavanti dhammā ātāpinojhāyinobrāhmaṇassa *nassa*
 [2] athassakaṅkhāvapayantisavvā yatokhayaṃpaccayānaṃvedī



Figure 3. Angkor Borei Pali inscription, Face 3.

Face 3

- [1] yadāhavepātubhavanti dhammā ātāpinojhāyinobrāhmaṇassa *nassa*



Figure 4. Angkor Borei Pali inscription, Face 4.

Face 4

- [1] athassakaṅkhāvapayantisavvā vidhūyantitthatimārasenaṃ

Edition

ye dhammā hetupabhavā
 tesam hetuṃ tathāgato āha
 tesañ ca yo nirodho
 evaṃvādī mahāsamana

yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
 ātāpino jhāyino brāhmaṇassa *nassa*
 athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti savvā
 yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṃ

yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
 ātāpino jhāyino brāhmaṇassa *nassa*
 athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti savvā
 yato khayam paccayānam avedi

yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā
 ātāpino jhāyino brāhmaṇassa *nassa*
 athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti savvā
 vidhū[pa]yan titthati mārasenam

Translation

The states arisen from a cause
 Their cause the Tathāgata proclaims,
 As well as their cessation:
 This is the teaching of the Great Ascetic.

Indeed! When the truths become clear
 To the ardent brahman as he meditates
 Then all of his uncertainties vanish
 When he fathoms the law of causation.

Indeed! When the truths become clear
 To the ardent brahman as he meditates
 Then all of his uncertainties vanish
 When he realizes the cessation of conditions.

Indeed! When the truths become clear
 To the ardent brahman as he meditates
 Then all of his uncertainties vanish
 And he stands having routed Māra's army.¹¹

Commentary

The *ye dhammā* stanza

The *ye dhammā* stanza is well known; for centuries it was widely inscribed across Asia in the Pali, Prakrit, and Sanskrit languages in several alphabets.¹² One notable point here is that, out of the two groups of Southeast Asian *ye dhammā* inscriptions in Pali, the Angkor Borei inscription belongs to the '*tesam* group', that is, the second line

¹¹ For another translation of the *yadā have* verse, see Ñāṇamoli, *Life of the Buddha*, pp. 30–31.

¹² See, for example, Skilling, 'Buddhist Sealings in Thailand and Southeast Asia'; idem., 'Buddhist sealings and the *ye dharmā* stanza.'

begins with *tesaṃ* rather than *yesaṃ*.¹³ This is the second ancient *ye dhammā* inscription to be discovered in Cambodia. The other example is engraved on the back of a standing Buddha image from Tuol Preah Theat, now in the Musée Guimet, Paris. It is not in Pali, but in closely related Prakrit.¹⁴

The *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā* verses

The *ye dhammā* stanza is followed by the three *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā* verses in *upajāti* metre. These verses are all citations or quotations – they are not original Pali compositions. The narrative setting of the *yadā have* (pronounced *yadā havé*) verses is the bodhi-tree at Bodh Gaya (in present-day Bihar, India), immediately after Buddha Gotama’s awakening, over 2,500 years ago.¹⁵ Their scriptural source is the Pali canon, or *Tipiṭaka*, where they occur twice, once each in two different collections or *Piṭakas*, the *Vinaya-piṭaka* and the *Sutta-piṭaka*. In the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, they come at the beginning of the ‘Account of the Awakening’ (*Bodhikathā*), the opening section of the *Great Chapter* (*Mahāvagga*).¹⁶ In the *Sutta-piṭaka* they occur in the *Udāna*, a book of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* or ‘Collection of Miscellaneous Texts’. Here they are found in the opening section of the ‘Chapter on the Awakening’ (*Bodhivagga*). The two versions set the scene in nearly identical narratives that relate how ‘on this occasion the Buddha, the Fortunate One, was staying at Uruvelā on the banks of the Nerañjarā river, at the foot of the bodhi-tree, when he had just awakened. The Fortunate One then sat at the foot of the bodhi-tree for one week, during which he savoured the joy of freedom’. The narratives then describe the three successive occasions during a single night when the newly awakened Buddha utters ‘inspired stanzas’, *udāna*. In his commentary on the *Vinaya*, the *Samantapāsādikā*, the great master Buddhaghosa (10th century BE or 5th century CE) reports two traditions regarding the ‘first words spoken by the Buddha’ (*paṭhama-buddha-vacana*): one is the *aneka-jāti-saṃsāraṃ* verses (*Dhammapada* vv. 153–4), or, ‘according to some’ (*keci*), the *yadā have* verses.¹⁷

¹³ For these groups, see Skilling, ‘A Buddhist inscription from Go Xoai’, pp. 180–181. For useful suggestions regarding the classification of *ye dharmā* inscriptions, see Strauch, ‘Two Stamps with the Bodhigarbhālaṃkāralakṣa Dhāraṇī’, pp. 49–53, and Griffiths, ‘Inscriptions of Sumatra’, pp. 142–146.

¹⁴ Baptiste and Zéphir, *L’art khmer dans les collections du musée Guimet*, Catalogue 3, pp. 26–28; close-up of inscription, pp. 20–21. The earliest report of the image and its inscription seems to be that by Dalet, ‘Quelques nouvelles sculptures khmères’, published in 1936.

¹⁵ ‘Awakening’: *bodhi*, *sambodhi*, *abhisambodhi*. The words and the concept have often been translated as ‘enlightenment’, however, since the terms derive from the verbal root *budh*, to *awaken*, I prefer ‘awakening’ because it is more accurate and it retains the metaphor.

¹⁶ In the Siamese edition, this is vol. 4 of the *Tipiṭaka* (*Vinayapiṭake Mahāvaggassa paṭhamo bhāgo*), but it is the first volume, the first book, in the roman-script Pali Text Society edition, produced in 1879 by Hermann Oldenberg (reprinted 1929, 1964). A note on the copyright page reads: “The Mahāvagga, which the Editor deemed desirable to publish first, is, in India, reckoned as the Third Part of the whole Piṭaka.” The renumbering of the volumes seems to have been Oldenberg’s own idea.

¹⁷ See Jayawickrama, *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna*, pp. 14–15. For the *anekajāti* verses, see Nāṇamoli, *Life of the Buddha*, pp. 28–29.

1) In the first watch of the night,¹⁸ the Buddha contemplated dependent arising in natural and reverse order. When he saw the signification of this, he uttered the first *udāna*.

2) In the second watch of the night, the Buddha contemplated dependent arising in natural and reverse order a second time. When he saw the signification of this, he uttered the second *udāna*.

3) In the third watch of the night, the Buddha contemplated dependent arising in natural and reverse order a third time. When he saw the signification of this, he spoke the third *udāna*.

The Buddha sat beneath the bodhi-tree for one week. When the week passed, he emerged from concentration and moved to the Ajaṇṇa fig tree.

Both the *ye dhammā* stanza and the *yadā have* verses are citations from the Pali *Tipiṭaka*, but their status is quite different. In terms of chronology, the *yadā have* verses come first, immediately after the Awakening, and the *ye dhammā* stanza later, after the first season of rains (*vassa*) – but I do not think that relative chronology was a particular concern for the initiators of the inscription. The Pali version calls the stanza a *dhammapariyāya*, a summary or epitome of the teaching (*imaṃ dhammapariyāyaṃ abhāsi*). The *yadā have* verses are inspired stanzas, *udānas*, uttered by the Buddha himself. The *ye dhammā* stanza is not spoken by the Buddha, but is an example of ‘the Dhamma spoken by a auditor’ (*sāvaka-bhāsita*).¹⁹ Here the auditor is Assaji, one of the Buddha’s first disciples, who teaches the truth of conditionality to Sāriputta through the *ye dhammā* stanza. The moment he hears it, Sāriputta realises the first stage of the path (*sotāpatti*). He returns and repeats the stanza to his ascetic companion, Moggallāna, who also gains the first stage. Sāriputta and Moggallāna go on to become realised *arahats* under Gotama Buddha himself. They become his two foremost disciples.²⁰

Intertextualities of referential worlds: the inscription and the printed Pali texts

In the following, I present the *Mahāvagga/Udāna* text according to the Pali Text Society editions, indicating words or phrases that differ from the Angkor Borei inscription by placing them in **bold typeface**.

¹⁸ For a note on the division of the night into three watches, see Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, n. 38, p. 454.

¹⁹ See the *Suttavibhaṅga* of the *Vinaya*: ‘the Dhamma is that which is spoken by Buddhas, spoken by auditors, spoken by sages, spoken by deities, that is connected to benefit and the goal and is connected to the truth’ (PTS IV, p. 15.9, *dhammo nāma buddha-bhāsito sāvaka-bhāsito isi-bhāsito deva-bhāsito atthupasañhito dhammupasañhito*). This broad definition of Dhamma is shared by the Buddhist schools in general: for details, see Lamotte, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, tome I, pp. 80–81. An ‘auditor’ (*sāvaka*) is a ‘hearer’ or ‘listener’, one who hears the Dhamma from the Buddha.

²⁰ For an English translation of the story, see Ñāṇamoli, *Life of the Buddha*, pp. 70–73.

*yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
ath'assa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā yato pajānāti sahetudhamman ti.*

*yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
ath'assa kaṅkhā vapayanti sabbā yato khayam paccayānaṃ avedī ti.*

*yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa
vidhūpayam tiṭṭhati mārasenaṃ suriyo 'va obhāsayam antalikkhan ti.*

In the textual versions, the first two lines of the three verses are identical. Lines *c* and *d* of the third verse, however, are different, and they introduce new ideas. The three verses of the inscription are broadly similar to the canonical versions, but there are several significant differences.

1) The main difference is the form of the verb in line *b*, where we find *jhāyino* in the inscription and *jhāyato* in most of the printed versions consulted. The Angkor Borei inscription reads *jhāyino*. The Thai-script printed editions consulted – the King Chulalongkorn Tipiṭaka edition of the *Vinaya Mahāvagga*,²¹ the Syāmaratṭha editions of both the *Mahāvagga* and the *Udāna*,²² the Siamese *Royal Chanting Book*²³ and a version of *The Translated Chants* all read *jhāyato*.²⁴ The roman-script Pali Text Society (PTS) edition,²⁵ Sinhala-script editions of the *Vinaya Mahāvagga* and *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā*,²⁶ and the Burmese-script Sixth Council editions also read *jhāyato* in both the *Vinaya Mahāvagga* and the *Udāna*.²⁷ Both *jhāyino* and *jhāyato* are respectable alternates for the genitive singular, as is the *dhyāyato* of the Sanskrit versions.²⁸

2) A second variant is use of *-vv-* in line *c* of the inscription in the place of the *-bb-* of the print versions, that is, *savvā* in place of *sabbā*. This is a purely orthographical variant

²¹ *Phra Vinayapiṭaka Mahāvagga*, vol. 1, edited by Phra Chao Nong Ya Thoe Krommameun Vajirañāporasa, RS 112, p. 2.11, etc. / พระวินัยปิฎก มหาวิภค เล่ม ๑, พระเจ้าอนึ่งยาเออกรมหมื่นวชิรญาณวโรรส. หน้า 2.11.

²² *Vinayapiṭake Mahāvaggassa paṭhamo bhāgo*, Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṃ, vol. 4, originally published BE 2470 [1927], repr. 2523 [1980], pp. 1–4; *Udāna*, Syāmaratṭhassa Tepiṭakaṃ, vol. 25, originally published BE 2469 [1926], repr. 2523 [1980], pp. 73–76.

²³ *Suatmon chabab luang khong Somdet Phrasangharāj (Pussadeva)*, 13th printing, 2526 [1983], p. 85.9. First published in 2423 [1880]. The verses come at the end of the *Sipsong tamnan* under the title *Buddha-udāna-gāthā*, after the *Bhaddekaratta-gāthā*.

²⁴ *Suatmon plae tang tae thamwat chao yen chet tamnan sipsongtamnan lae pakinnakakhatha*, BE 2466 [1923], p. 2 70.2 etc., *jhāyato*.

²⁵ *Vinaya* (PTS) I, p. 2.3, etc.; *Udāna* (PTS) p. 2, antepenult, etc.

²⁶ *Vinayapiṭakayehi 03 vana granthaya* (The Third Book in the Vinaya-Pitaka 3): *Mahāvaggapāli, Prathama bhāgaya* (Part 1). With the Sinhala translation by the venerable Pandita Arihalaṃgoḍa Dhammakusala Sthavira (Buddha Jayantī Tripiṭaka Granthamālā 3), [Sri Lanka:] Siṃhala Parivartanayen yuktayi, 2550 /2006, p. 4.4, etc.; *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā*, (Simon Hewavitarne Series), p. 34.2. I am grateful to Petra Kieffer-Pülz for sending images of the Chulalongkorn and Sinhala editions cited here.

²⁷ *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti Piṭakaṃ, Khuddakanikāye Vinayapiṭake Mahāvagga-pāli*, 4th printing, Sāsana era 2523, Christian era 1979, *Mahāvaggapāli, Bodhikathā*, p. 2.4, etc., *jhāyato*; *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti Piṭakaṃ, Suttantapiṭake, Khuddakanikāye, Khuddakapāṭha Dhammapada Udāna Itivuttaka Suttanipāṭapāli*, 4th printing, Buddhavassa 2515, Maramavassa 1333, 1972, *Udānapāli, Bodhivagga*, p. 78.2, etc., *jhāyato*.

²⁸ See for convenience the Sanskrit of the *Mahāvastu* and the *Catuspariṣat-sūtra* in Skilling, 'Some Citation Inscriptions', p. 275.

and it does not affect the meaning. The Angkor Borei inscription clearly distinguishes between the letters *ba* and *va*. The letter *va* is frequent in the verses; it is a pear-shaped oval that tapers towards the top, which often bears a short bar. The letter *ba* occurs three times, in the same word, with a subscript *ra* in *brāhmaṇassa*. It is square shaped with a broad flat line on the top.

The use of *-vv-* in place of *-bb-* in early Southeast Asian Pali is seen in the so-called ‘Pyu’ inscriptions from Burma: the second Maunggan gold plate²⁹ and the Khin ba gold leaves and the silver reliquary from Śrīkṣetra (‘Old Prome’). The usage has been noted by von Hinüber in the four folios of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* in the National Archives, Kathmandu, dating to about the 9th century CE, and in other Pali inscriptions,³⁰ and the practice has since been confirmed by further epigraphs.³¹ The available evidence shows a preference for *-vv-* through the first millennium CE. When and where the preference changed to *-bb-* cannot be determined, except to say that there is no longer any evidence for *-vv-* in the written Pali of the second millennium.

3) A major difference is that the last two *pādas* of the final verse of the inscription differ from all known other versions. The inscription repeats line *c* of the preceding verses, and ends with *vidhūyan titthati mārasenaṃ*, making:

athassa kaṅkhā vapayanti savvā, vidhū[pa]yan titthati mārasenaṃ

instead of:

vidhūpayam titthati mārasenaṃ suriyo ’va obhāsayam antalikkham.

I am not at all certain that this is a genuine redactional variation – that it is the product of conscientious editorial deliberation. I suspect that the scribe or the stone-carver dropped a single syllable, the *-pa-* of *vidhūpayan*, and that line *c* should read *vidhūpayan titthati mārasenaṃ* with the print versions. I also suspect that the scribe or the stone-carver repeated line *c* from the two preceding verses and then added the correct line *c*, with the result that he had to drop the last line, the simile of the sunrise. In fact, we do not know how the inscription or similar inscriptions were produced, whether from exemplars written on a temporary support or by oral dictation. It may be that the written exemplar, if there was one, was wrong, or it may simply be that someone’s memory failed.

Note also the use of dentals rather than retroflexes in the *-ttha-* of *titthati*.

The verses are found in Buddhist Sanskrit and Sanskrit Buddhist sources, such as the *Mahāvastu* (Senart, II, pp. 416–417) or in the *Chapter on Brahmans* in the

²⁹ Ray, *Introduction to the Study of Theravāda Buddhism in Burma*, pp. 33–34. Ray describes Maunggan as ‘a small village close to the ancient ruins of Hmawza’. The plates are preserved in the British Library: Luce, *Phases of Pre-Pagan Burma*, vol. 1, p. 175, vol. 2, pl. 98b. See also Zwalf, *Buddhism: Art and Faith*, cat. no. 91.

³⁰ von Hinüber, ‘Epigraphical Varieties of Continental Pāli’ ([1985] 2009), p. 490; *The Oldest Pali Manuscript* (1991), p. 9, n. 15.

³¹ Skilling, ‘New Pāli Inscriptions’ (1997), pp. 128–129.

anthology of verses, the *Udānavarga*.³² In narratives of the awakening they occur in the *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* preserved in Tibetan, the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinayavastu*, and the Sarvāstivādin *Catuspariṣatsūtra* (§ 7.1 ff.) preserved in Sanskrit and Tibetan, and the *Fo ben xing ji jing* 佛本行集經, translated into Chinese by Jñānagupta, a monk from Gandhara, in 587–59.³³ There are interesting discrepancies in the different versions. These have been examined in considerable detail by Tuneld, Bareau, and Nakamura.³⁴ New textual evidence is now available, but this is not the place to pursue the chimera of textual variety further.

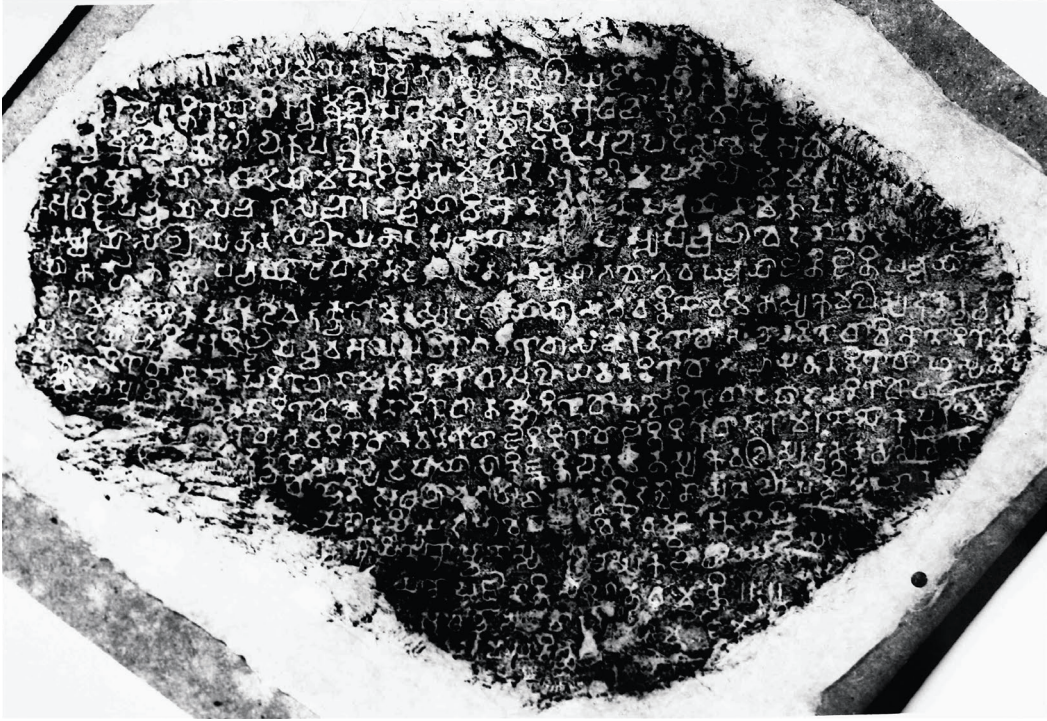


Figure 5. Estampage of Pali inscription from Kunzeik, Burma.

In both Pali and Sanskrit, inspired stanzas are called *udānas*, expressions of profound insight and joy. The redactors of the different schools do not, however, always agree on terminology: they choose different words. The Pali and some other versions describe the *yadā have* verses as an *udāna* (*imaṃ udānaṃ udānesi*), but in some of the Sanskrit versions they are called *gāthā*. In the *Gāthāsaṃgraha-śāstrārtha*, a commentary on a

³² Chap. 33, *Brāhmaṇavarga*, the set of eight verses from no. 76 to 83, which are formed by substituting key phrases.

³³ Taishō 190: for details see Junko Matsumura, ‘An Independent Sūtra on the Dīpaṅkara Prophecy, *Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*, vol. XV, May, 2011 (Professor Hubert Durt Felicitation Volume on the Occasion of His Retirement), p. 128 (full article, pp. 81–141 [134–74]). See Beal, *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*, pp. 236–237: Beal’s translation is bit obscure and a new rendering is a desideratum. This is a completely different text from the Tibetan *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, which is very close to the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinayavastu* accounts.

³⁴ Tuneld, pp. 54–64; Bareau, pp. 93–97; Nakamura, pp. 197–204.

collection of verses attributed to Ācārya Vasubandhu (about 4th century CE), that is preserved only in Tibetan translation, the *yadā have* verses are cited as an example of the *udāna-aṅga* of the twelve types or genres of the Buddha's teaching.

The *yadā have* verses: epigraphic continuity

I do not think that there is much need to discuss the epigraphic continuity of the *ye dhammā* stanza: it is the 'best-seller' of Buddhist verses, for centuries virtually omnipresent in South and Southeast Asian epigraphy.

The case of the *yadā have* verses is more intriguing. The Angkor Borei inscription is not the only Southeast Asian epigraph to transmit the *yadā have* verses: they have enjoyed currency in inscribed form over a wide area and a long stretch of time, but only, so far as I have seen, in Southeast Asia and not in South Asia, including Sri Lanka, or elsewhere. During the early period of Southeast Asian epigraphy, there were two main zones where Pali citation inscriptions were common: the region of Lower Burma (Myanmar) and the Chao Phraya valley of Siam (Thailand). The Angkor Borei inscription, along with some other inscribed artefacts, suggest that the second zone should be extended to include the Mekong delta and the Korat plateau.

1) One example is from Lower Burma. The prose of the *Bodhikathā* from the beginning up to the end of the first *yadā have* verse is given in an early inscription from Kunzeik (Kwanseik, Konseit) on the east bank of the Sittaung River, some forty miles east of Pegu (Bago) (Figure 5).³⁵ The Kunzeik inscription reads *jhāyino*.

There are three early examples from central Siam, all of them from Lopburi province.

2) All three *yadā have* verses are engraved on an octagonal stone pillar, unfortunately in fragments, from Sap Champa (District Ka Luang, Lopburi, Siam / ซับจำปา อำเภอท่าหลวง จังหวัดลพบุรี). The inscription has been dated to the 12th to 13th centuries BE [7th or 8th century CE].³⁶ No fragments of the line that interests me are preserved.

³⁵ Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Burma* (1972), pp. 110 (image), 111 (explanation) – noted by Luce, 'Advent of Buddhism to Burma' (1974), p. 126 and *Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma* (1985), vol. 1, p. 176 and by von Hinüber, *The Oldest Pali Manuscript* (1991), p. 25, n. 53. See also Skilling, 'The Advent of Theravāda Buddhism to Mainland South-east Asia' (1997), p. 95, n. 7.

³⁶ 'Sap Champa 1': *Charuek boran runraek pop thi Lop Buri lae klai khiang* [Essays on the ancient inscriptions found at Lop Buri and the vicinity]. Bangkok: The Fine Arts Department, 1981. จารึกโบราณหินอ่อนที่ลพบุรีและใกล้เคียง. กรุงเทพฯ: กรมศิลปากร, 2524, pp. 74–81; *Charuek nai prathet thai*, 1¹ (2529), pp. 116–122; *Charuek nai prathet thai*, 1² (2559), pp. 172–177; Supaphan na Bangchang. *Wiwathanakan ngan khian phasa bali nai prathet thai: charuek tamnan phongsawadan san pratat*, Bangkok, 2529 [1986] / สุภาพรรณ ณ บางช้าง, วิวัฒนาการงานเขียนภาษาบาลีในประเทศไทย: จารึก ตำนาน พงศาวดาร สำนวน ประกาศ. กรุงเทพฯ: มูลนิธิมหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัยฯ, pp. 21–25. Sap Champa Museum Lop Buri / *Sapchampa: phiphitaphan sapchampa changwat lopburi*, ed. by Phuthorn Bhumadon, Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing, 2558 [2015], pp. 58, 61–63.

3) Only a fragment survives of another octagonal stone pillar also from Sap Champa. It as well has been dated to the 12th to 13th centuries BE [7th or 8th centuries CE].³⁷ The fragment of lines 3 and 4 may possibly be restored to *dhamma ā// dhammaṃ*, that is, *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā ātāpino ... yato pajānāti sahetudhammaṃ*.

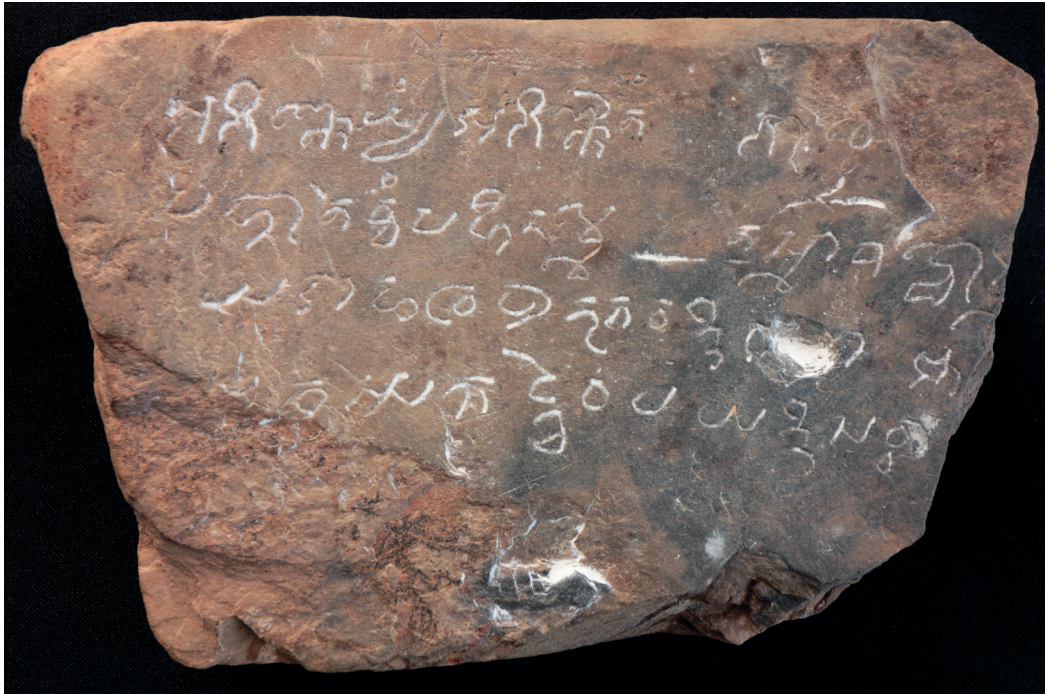


Figure 6. *yadā have* verse on stone slab from Ban Phrommadin, Lopburi Province. (Photo courtesy of Fragile Palm Leaves/ Henry Ginsburg Fund)

4) The first line of a *yadā have* verse is inscribed on a stone slab from Ban Phrommadin (District Khok Samrong, also in Lopburi Province / บ้านพรหมหิน อำเภอโคกสำโรง จังหวัดลพบุรี) (Figure 6). The slab contains the *abhiññeyyaṃ abhiññātaṃ* verse, followed by *yadā have*; because the slab is broken and only the first line of the *yadā have* survives, it is impossible to say with any certainty which verse it is.³⁸ The texts are written in a cursive Brahmi, that has been dated to the 13th to 14th centuries BE [8th or 9th century CE] but may be earlier.

None of the early inscriptions bear dates; the dates given so far have all been arrived at on palæographic grounds. In the later period, inscriptions bear dates or can be dated more securely.

³⁷ ‘Sap Champa 4’: *Charuek boran runraek* (2524), pp. 28–29; *Charuek nai prathet thai*, 1¹ (2529), pp. 241–243; *Charuek nai prathet thai*, 1² (2559), pp. 332–334; Supaphan, *Wiwathanakan* (2529), pp. 21–25; *Sap Champa Museum*, p. 59.

³⁸ The right side of the stone is broken off and the line we are interested in is lost. *Charuek boran runraek* (2524), pp. 14–17; *Charuek nai prathet thai*, 1¹ (2529), pp. 237–240; *Charuek nai prathet thai*, 1² (2559), pp. 338–341; Supaphan, *Wiwathanakan* (2529), pp. 39–40; Skilling, ‘New Pāli Inscriptions’ (1997), pp. 126–129.

5) A dated Lanna inscription in the Tham script is engraved on the base of a bronze seated Buddha from Wat Phra Koet Khongkharam, Tambol Wiang, Amphoe Mueang, Chiang Rai (วัดพระเกิดคงคาราม, ตำบลเวียง, อำเภอเมือง, จังหวัดเชียงราย). It opens with the date Śakarāj 876 (= BE 2057, 1514 CE) after which come the three *yadā have* verses followed by an aspiration in Pali.³⁹ All three verses read *jhāyato*.

6) The verses continued to be inscribed into the Ratanakosin or Bangkok period. In BE 2376 (1833 CE), King Rāma III built and dedicated a *cetiya* to his father King Rāma II. This is the Phra Mahachedi Dilokathamkaroknithan at Wat Pho in Bangkok (Wat Phra Chetuphon: พระมหาเจดีย์ดิลกธรรมกรกนิทาน, วัดโพธิ์ [วัดพระเชตุพนวิมลมังคลาราม]). A long, narrow gold leaf resembling a palm-leaf manuscript was recovered when the *cetiya* was repaired in BE 2532 [1989 CE].⁴⁰ One side bore five lines of Pali citations, including *anekajāti saṃsāraṃ*, the *yadā have*, and several other verses. All three stanzas read *jhāyato*.

7) The first *yadā have* verse is inscribed, with some variants, in the Mon script as caption to a marble relief panel, dating to the reign of King Rāma IV (1851–1868). The panel is one of four panels set into the four faces of the base of a gold-plated *cetiya* in the central sanctum of the Great Chedi at Wat Bovoranivet in Bangkok (พระเจดีย์กาฬลัทธิ ในคูหาพระเจดีย์ใหญ่ วัดบวรนิเวศวิหาร). They depict the four cardinal events of Gautama Buddha's life: his birth, his awakening, his first sermon, and his death. The representation of the Awakening is on the eastern face. There the verse is described as the first *udāna* of the Blessed One (*idaṃ tassa bhagavato paṭhamam udānam*).⁴¹ It reads *jhāyato*.

The *yadā have* verses: liturgical continuity

Another type of evidence attests to the liturgical use of the verses in chanting and recitation. For the more recent Bangkok period, we find the *yadā have* verses in Siamese chanting books. Some versions of the *Royal Chanting Book* and the *Translated Chants* include the *yadā have* verses under the title, *Buddha-udāna-gāthā*.⁴²

Research into the liturgical tradition is not easy. In the thirteenth and sixteenth printings of the *Royal Chanting Book*, the *yadā have* verses come at the end of the *Sipsong tamnan* as *Buddha-udāna-gāthā*, after the *Bhaddekaratta-gāthā*. They are not

³⁹ Chiang Rai 62 in *Lanna Inscriptions*, Part I, Volume I, pp. 48–49; Volume II, figs. 42–45.

⁴⁰ Kongkaew Weeraprachak, 'Charuek lan thong,' p. 171, 230–234. Fig p. 44.

⁴¹ *Chaturongkhamongkhon Wat Bovoranivet* (2508 [1965]), p. 21 and plate facing p. 23; *Tamnan Wat Bovoniwetwihan*, Rongphim Krungthep, 2528, p. 248 with figs.; colour image, p. 48, top right; *Silapakam Wat Boworanivetwihan*, Bangkok, 2528, p. 58, top right.

⁴² *Suatmon chabab luang khong Somdet Phra Sangkharat (Pussadeva)*. 16th printing. Bangkok: Mahāmakūṭarājavidyālaya, 2538 [1995], p. 85; *Suatmon plae*. Compiled and translated by Phra Sasanasophon Wat Makut-kasatriyarama. [2491] 1938. 12th printing. Bangkok: Mahāmakūṭarājavidyālaya, 2538 [1995], pp. 295–296. Here I mention only Thai chanting books because I am unfamiliar with other traditions.

included at this place, or, as far as I can tell, anywhere else, in one of the earliest editions, presumably the first, *The Chanting Book Anthologizing Assorted Sutras and Parittas, Printed at the Royal Printing House in the Royal Grand Palace, in the Dragon Year, Year ending in two, Sakarāj 1242*,⁴³ or in an early reprinting, *Royal Chanting Book Anthologizing Assorted Sutras and Parittas of Phrasangharāj (Pussadeva)*, printed in 1912.⁴⁴ They are, however, included in *The Royal Chanting Book Anthologizing Assorted Sutras and Parittas of Somdet Phrasangharāj (Pussadeva) (Nangsue suatmon chabab luang ruam phrasut lae phraparit tang tang khong Somdet Phrasangharāj (Pussadeva)*. This version was edited by Phra Thammatrailokachan (Ñāṇavara) of Wat Thepsirintharawat, according to the line of thought (*phra mati*) of Somdet Phra Chao Boromawong Thoe Kromphraya Vajirañāṇavarorasa; it was printed by a private press, the Rongphim Thai at the Saphan Yotse bridge, in RS 130 [1912].

What is the connection, if any, between the epigraphic and liturgical uses? I do not think that there is any evidence for the early period, but I suspect that, for the later period, the choice of the verses for inscription was a result of their liturgical status, which is seen in their inclusion in chanting books.

It turns out that the textual variations between the canonical and liturgical versions are not as straightforward as the discussion so far might imply. The transmission of the verses is hardly a tidy affair – it is a tangle, intricate and convoluted. This is, in fact, the normal state of affairs for texts that were transmitted over millennia across a wide region. Modern printed editions are only the end-products of a long process of transmission. My study only skims the surface, and I hope that future scholars will explore these topics more deeply in original manuscripts and epigraphic records and in close consultation with living liturgical traditions.

The relative frequency of the *yadā have* verses in Southeast Asian epigraphy may be explained, at least in part, by their status as the first words, or first *udāna*, spoken by Gotama Buddha after his Awakening. They are also adopted, or adapted, in literature, in some versions of the *Pathomsomphot*, the story of the Buddha's life and career, but an excursion into Siam's rich literary heritage will lead us too far astray.⁴⁵

The alternate first utterance of the Buddha, the *anekajāti* verses, is also met in Thai epigraphy. Other epigraphic choices in Southeast Asia are the core teachings of the Buddha: the *ye dhammā* stanza, the formula of dependent arising, the sutta and verses on the four truths of the noble ones, and so on. All of these have didactic value and multiple functions in consecration rituals and liturgical practices. Other inscriptions

⁴³ *Nangsue suatmon ruam phrasut lae phraparit tang tang tiphim rongphim luang nai Phra Boromamaharatchawang, pi marong tho sok sakaraj 1242* = BE 2423 [1880], repr. Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing, 2551 [2008]: p. 77 ends with *Bhaddekaratta-gāthā* and a new section begins on the next page.

⁴⁴ *Nangsue suatmon chabab luang ruam phrasut lae phraparit tang tang khong Somdet Phrasangharāj (Pussadeva)*, edited by Phra Thammatrailokachan (Ñāṇavara) of Wat Thepsirintharawat according to the line of thought (*phra mati*) of Somdet Phra Chao Boromawong Thoe Kromphraya Vajirañāṇavarorasa, 5th printing, Rongphim Thai Saphan Yotse, RS 130 [1912]

⁴⁵ *Pathomsomphot [Paṭhamasambodhi]: Thammasombat muat thi 1*, compiled by Somdet Phra Sangharat (Pussadeva), edited by Phra Mahasamana Chao Kromphraya Vajirañāṇavarorasa, Bangkok, Mahāmakutaṛājavidyālaya, 21st printing, 2531 [1988], *Dhammadesanādhīṭṭhāna-kathā kan thi 3*, pp. 54–55 (reading *jhāyato*).

from Cambodia, from a later period, share liturgical features as well. These include the *namo buddhāya guruve* inscription from Kompong Svay, a verse of homage which had a remarkable transregional reach,⁴⁶ and the *oṃ maṇipadme hūṃ*, inscribed on the back-plate of an image of eight-armed Avalokiteśvara.⁴⁷ Going further afield, Sanskrit *dhāraṇī* and *praṇidhāna* inscriptions from the Indonesian archipelago and elsewhere also share in this epigraphic–liturgical world.⁴⁸

Our understanding of Buddhism and Buddhist practices in early Southeast Asia is patchy and fragmentary. The *ye dhammā* is a summary of dependent arising and the four truths; the *yadā have* verses stand for the Buddha’s awakening and his insight into dependent arising. Many of the verses selected for inscription are recyclings, in the best sense of the term, of dependent arising and the four truths – the core teachings of Sākyamuni Buddha. The citation inscriptions that are preserved – and many must be lost, or await discovery – give a precious glimpse of some of the texts that would once have lived on the tongues and in the hearts of devotees in the distant past. They reveal intertextualities of function and use, entwined with the didactic and liturgical habits of the age. The fact that the Angkor Borei inscription is in Pali may seem to be an anomaly in a region and period in which Sanskrit was the language of epigraphic choice, but perhaps it is not. K. 1355 joins several other early Pali inscriptions from beyond the Chao Phraya plain, from the Korat plateau and from the marches of Prachinburi that lead into central Cambodia. These include an image of the Buddha seated in meditation from Si Thep, Petchabun province, with a *ye dhammā* inscribed on its base, a Buddha from Sung Noen District, Nakhon Ratchasima province (K. 987), seated in meditation within a niche with *ye dhammā* written around the niche, a large stone slab with an ornate or calligraphic *ye dhammā* from Nong Bua Daeng, Chaiyaphum province (K. 1166), and a fragment of a tiny *ye dhammā* from Prachinburi province, not to speak of the Old Khmer inscription from Noen Sa Bua, Amphoe Si Mahosot Prachinburi, which opens with Pali verses of homage to the three precious jewels from the poem, *Telakaṭāhakathā*.⁴⁹

Some of these artefacts are small finds, and they alert us not to ignore small finds – not to privilege large or glamorous objects. Small objects – a bead, a fragment of a sculpture, or small inscription like the Angkor Borei tablet, have their own weight in the material complexes of history. Inscriptions show that Pali was used throughout the region of mainland Southeast Asia. The use of Pali points to the presence of the Theravaṃsa, that is, the presence of monastics ordained in the Thera tradition. Pali evidence appears by the sixth or seventh century; this implies that the Thera tradition has been continuously present in the region since that time. The Theravaṃsa has always been here.

⁴⁶ Skilling, ‘Namo Buddhāya Gurave.’ The image is displayed in the Phnom Penh National Museum.

⁴⁷ Skilling, ‘An *Oṃ maṇipadme Hūṃ* Inscription.’ The image is preserved in the Alexander B. Griswold Collection at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Its provenance is not known.

⁴⁸ See Griffiths, ‘Written traces of the Buddhist past: Mantras and Dhāraṇīs in Indonesian inscriptions.’

⁴⁹ For the first three inscriptions see Skilling, ‘Traces of the Dharma’. The Prachinburi *ye dhammā* is as yet unpublished. For the Noen Sa Bua inscription see Rohanadeera, ‘The Noen Sa Bua Inscription’ and P.Ch.14 / *The Inscriptions in Thailand* volume 1, pp. 179–186 (in Thai).

Chronology

Canon

Vinaya Mahāvagga

Udāna

Yadā have verses

Angkor Borei – 7th to 8th century

Kunzeik – 7th to 8th century

Sap Champa 1 – 7th to 8th century

Sap Champa 4 – 7th to 8th century

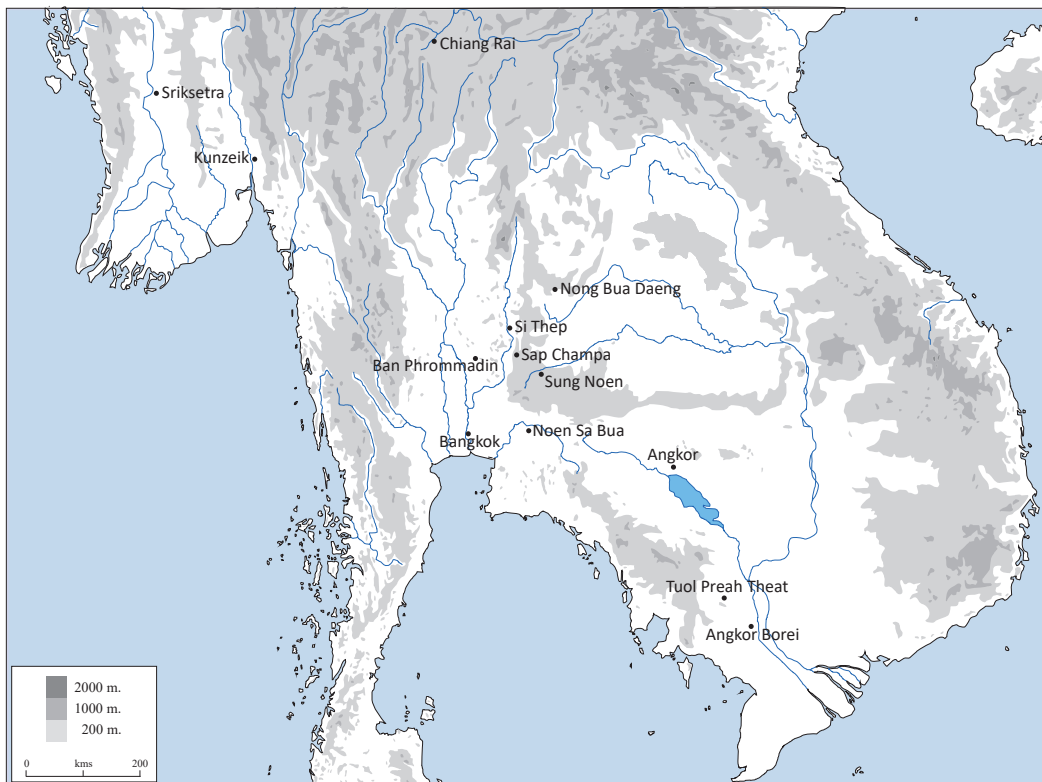
Ban Phrommadin – 8th to 9th century

Wat Phra Koet, Chiang Saen, 1514

Reign of Rāma III (1824–1851) – Wat Pho, 1833

Reign of Rāma IV (1851–1868) – Wat Bovoranives

Suat mon plae – 1938



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