

AN INSCRIPTION IN OLD MÒN
FROM WIENG MANÓ
IN CHIENG MAI PROVINCE
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by

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A stone slab in the museum of the Department of History, at the University of Chieng Mai, bears an inscription which seems to be the oldest ever discovered in northern Siam. (Fig. 1.)

The stone, which is 35.5 cm. high and 21 cm. wide, was dug up in February, 1968, outside the western rampart of the old town of *Wieng Manó* (เวียงม่อน) in the *Hàng Dồng* District (อ. หางดง) of *Chieng Mai* Province.

For the reading and translation that appear below, we are chiefly indebted to Professor Gordon H. Luce, of St. Lawrence, Jersey, Channel Islands. We have also received valuable suggestions from Professor H.S. Shorto of the London School of Oriental and African Studies.

The inscription is undated. It commemorates the founding of an object of worship—either a monument or an image of the Buddha—by five persons, whose names are given, but whom we cannot identify with anyone known to us from other sources.

The importance of the inscription lies less in its contents than in its provenance, its language and its probable age. It was discovered less than 10 km. from *Lampùn*, the capital of the kingdom of Haripuñjaya which was ruled by a Môn dynasty from the 8th century until the *Tai* conquest in the late 13th.¹ Judging from the writing

1) The three main sources for the history of Haripuñjaya are *Jinakālamāli* and *Cāmadevivamsa*, both in Pali, and the *Lampùn Chronicle* in *Tai Yuan*. The pertinent passages of the first two are translated in Coedès, *Documents sur l'histoire politique et religieuse du Laos occidental*, BEFEO XXV; the third is translated in Notton, *Annales du Siam, II, Chronique de La-p'un*, Paris, 1930. According to *Jinakālamāli*, the city was founded by the R̥ṣi Vāsudeva

and orthography, Professor Luce is inclined to date it in the 10th century, while Professor Shorto favors a date around 1100.

Six stone inscriptions emanating from the kingdom of Hari-
puñjaya were dug up long ago in the town of *Lampūn* or its immediate
vicinity (not to mention a fragment of a seventh which is in such bad
condition that nothing can be made of it). They are preserved in the
small museum in the precinct of Vāt Braḥ Dhātu in the town of
Lampūn. Three of them were published in 1925 by the late Professor
George Coedès², and all six of them were later published by R. Hal-
liday in collaboration with C.O. Blagden³. All of them are in old
Mōn, two of them beginning with passages in Pali; they all record
donations to religion; and the context, as well as the partial use of
Pali, shows that the religion was Theravāda Buddhism. On paleo-
graphic grounds, says Coedès, they are clearly later than the inscrip-
tions of King Kyanzittha of Pagán (1084-1113)⁴. Two of them,

in B.E. 1204, C.S. 22, i.e. 660 A.D.; and 'two years later' Princess Camma-
devī arrived from Lavapura (*Lopburī*) to reign over it. Coedès, however,
gives good reasons to believe that the true date was about 100 years later
(op. cit., pp. 19-25). Cāmadevīvaṃsa gives no date. According to the
Lampūn Chronicle, (Notton, op. cit., p. 17), the city was founded by Vāsu-
deva in a mōñ-mēt year (no numeral given), and the invitation sent to
Cammadevī in the pōk-sǎn year 690 of an unstated era, the date being
further specified as 1071 B.E. Disregarding the year given in B.E., which
is manifestly wrong, and assuming the unstated era to be M.S. (Mahāsaka-
rāja), the date the invitation was sent to Cammadevī would be the pōk-sǎn
year C.S. 130, equivalent to 768 A.D., while the mōñ-mēt year for the
founding of the city by Vāsudeva would be C.S. 129 or 767 A.D. (as any
part of a year counts as a whole year in the traditional arithmetic, a large
part of C.S. 130 would be 'two years later' than a date in C.S. 129). These
two dates, being about 100 years later than Jinakālamālī's—and thus corre-
sponding to Coedès's estimate—stand a good chance of being genuine.
Tentatively, therefore, we may place the founding of Haripuñjaya around
767-768 A.D.

2) Coedès, op. cit., BEFEO XXV, pp. 189-195.

3) Halliday, *Les inscriptions mōn du Siam*, BEFEO XXX, pp. 86-105.

4) Coedès, op. cit., p. 189; cf. the note by C.O. Blagden, published in Halliday,
op. cit., pp. 86-87.

which emanate from King Sabbādhisiddhi of Haripuñjaya, bear legible dates. These, according to Coedès, correspond to 1213 and 1219 A.D. for one of them, and to 1218 for the other⁵.

Professors Luce and Shorto both observe that the Wieng Manó inscription is very much like those of Lampûn in language, script and orthography. In several cases the final consonant of a word is reduplicated as a substitute for the virāma. This practice, as Blagden long ago noted, is a striking peculiarity of the inscriptions of Haripuñjaya, foreshadowing a similar practice in the writing of Siamese in the inscriptions of Sukhodaya, beginning with the earliest one we possess (1292 A.D.)⁶.

As the Wieng Manó inscription is either contemporary with those of Kyanzittha (Shorto), or earlier (Luce), it is evidently older than those in the Lampûn museum. That is why we have ventured to call it the oldest inscription so far discovered in northern Siam.

We are indebted to Professor Thin Ratikanok, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and head of the Department of History at Chieng Mai University, and to Mr. Kraiśrī Nimmānaheminda, for drawing our attention to the inscription and supplying a photograph; to Dr. Hans Penth, of Chieng Mai University, for bringing the stone to Bangkok for us to examine, and for providing the photograph in Fig. 1; to Professor Shorto for his generous help; and above all to Professor Luce, who first read and interpreted the inscription for us, and who has given us much valuable advice.

5) Coedès, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 192.

6) See Blagden's note in Halliday, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

TEXT

- [1] wo' mñāḥ msunn (a—)⁷
 [2] ss(r)āy kyāk
 [3] wo' ya sukk (mā—)
 [4] (la) taju addharāj
 [5] konn moyy hi—
 [6] mo' māñ dhanna—
 [7] rāj noradra
 [8] konn kāla tā
 [9] va jinnalāyy

TRANSLATION⁸

These five persons [have] this Kyāk⁹ as their refuge¹⁰: the Lady Sukkmāla¹¹; the Lord Addharāj¹²; a child [of theirs] named Māñ Dhannarāj¹³; Noradra the child of Kāla; Tāva Jinnalāyy¹⁴.

- 7) The parentheses indicate doubtful readings. We have supplied the hyphens at the ends of lines 1, 3, 5 and 6.
- 8) Words we have added to fill out the sense are enclosed in square brackets.
- 9) The word **kyāk** occurs frequently in Old Môn inscriptions, meaning either the Buddha, or an hypostasis of the Buddha such as a statue or a monument. Here it evidently means a statue or a monument, but it is hard to say which.
- 10) Conjectural translation. The reading **assrāy** is uncertain: if it is right, the word may represent Pali **assaya** or Skt. **āśraya**, 'refuge'. 'To have this Kyāk as their refuge' should mean they are founding this statue or this monument. Whatever the word may be, the context calls for something that means 'to found' or 'to donate'.
- 11) The lady seems to be of higher rank than her husband, as her name comes first; perhaps she was the ruler of the district, just as Cammadevī had been ruler of Haripūñjaya long before. **Sukk** is perhaps for Skt./Pali **sukha**, 'delight', etc.; or for Pali **sukkha**, 'white', 'pure' or 'good'; or for Skt. **śukra**, 'bright', also a name of the planet Venus. **Māla** is probably for Skt./Pali **mālā**, 'a garland'.
- 12) **Tju**, here written **taju**, is the Old Môn word for 'lord', which appears in two of the Lampūn inscriptions (see Halliday, op. cit., p. 95, line 1 of the text at the bottom of the page; p. 96, line 1 at the bottom of the page; and p. 97, note 5). **Addharāj**, appears to mean 'half-king' (Pali **addha**, 'half'; **rāja**, 'king'). The significance of the title escapes us. Does it mean an uparāja? or something like 'prince consort'? or perhaps for Pali **attharāj**, 'prosperous king'?
- 13) cf. Skt./Pali **dhanarāja**, 'wealthy king', etc.
- 14) Lines 7-9 evidently contain the names of the last two of the five donors, but it is by no means clear how they should be divided. Our translation of these lines is highly conjectural, and not very satisfactory.

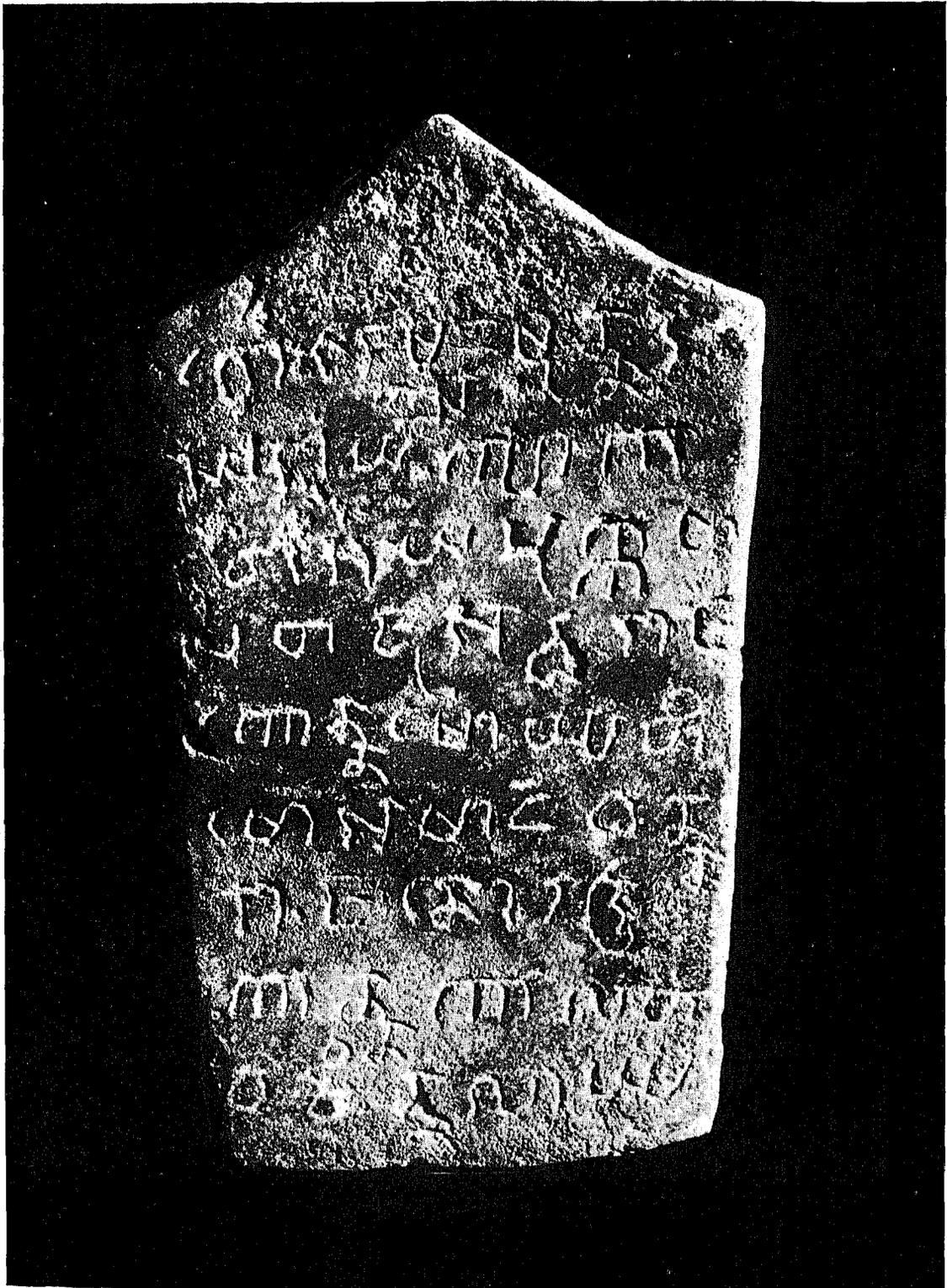


Fig. 1.

