

THE KHMER INSCRIPTIONS OF TENASSERIM: A REINTERPRETATION

by
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These four short inscriptions were discovered in 1954 and were published in 1965 by Prof. George Coedès who interpreted them as diplomas conferring rank or titles.¹ They are dated 1384-1388 *saka* corresponding to 1462-1466 A.D., and all of them contain the titles, in full or in part, of the king who was responsible for them. In Coedès' opinion these titles cannot refer to the king ruling at Ayutthaya because at that time the ruler was Paramatrilokanātha, and in any case, according to Coedès, the Khmer language was unlikely to have been used for Ayutthayan inscriptions, "car le Cambodge et sa langue n'avaient aucune raison de jouir d'un pareil prestige".² He concluded that the Tenasserim inscriptions must have been due to a Cambodian prince and explained his presence at Tenasserim by a Thai invasion of Cambodia during which two of that country's princes were taken to Ayutthaya.³ Further evidence supporting this view was the fact that the royal title in the Tenasserim inscriptions, according to Coedès, is "presque identique" to that of the Khmer king who had the bas-reliefs of Angkor Vat completed in the period between 1546 and 1564.⁴

Since then Prof. O. Wolters has written about the Cambodian chronicles of this period and has accepted these inscriptions as proof of

Notes Transcription: For citations from inscriptions and pre-modern documents and for the names of archeological sites I have used the system based on the Sanskrit value of the letters of the Thai and Cambodian alphabets as described, for Thai, by Coedès in *Prachum charu'k sayam*, Bangkok, 2467 (1924). Titles of modern Thai publications are transcribed according to the "General System" recommended by the Royal Institute. When writing the names of locations which are modern administrative centers I prefer to follow official Thai government usage and avoid such awkward academic forms as Kāmbhēn Bejra, Ayudhyā and Bīṣṇuloka.

1) Coedès, G., "Documents épigraphiques provenant de Tenasserim", *Siam Society Felicitation Volumes for Prince Dhani Nivat*, 1965, vol. II, pp. 203-209. Cited as "Tenasserim".

2) *ibid.*, p. 207. Concerning the name "Paramatrilokanātha", as this king is referred to by Coedès, the reader should be aware that the earliest document in which this title is found is the Vat Culāmaṇī inscription in which it appears as Paramatrilokanārtha. The *Hlvah Prasro'th Chronicle* refers to this king as *samtec brah parama trailoka cau* or *samtec brah trailoka cau*. In what follows I shall adopt Coedès' usage of "Paramatrilokanātha" as a conventional form familiar to western readers.

3) *ibid.*, p. 208.

4) *ibid.*, p. 207.

a Thai invasion and as evidence supporting his revision of the chronology of the chronicles.⁵ In his interpretation the inscriptions show that one of the captive princes was established with his exiled court as an Ayutthayan vassal at Tenasserim.⁶

It seems to the writer that certain important features of the evidence have been neglected and that a better interpretation is possible.

First, concerning the territorial extent and prestige of the Khmer language, this is not the only instance of the use of Khmer outside the Cambodian state or in Thai territory after the fall of the Angkor empire. In fact there was a long tradition of the use of Khmer in certain territories which lay outside the empire and which later became part of the Ayutthayan domain. This is shown by inscriptions found in Ayutthaya itself and at Nakhon Sawan and dated 859 and 1089 *śaka* (937 and 1167 A.D.)⁷

Another case is that of the Khmer inscription on the so-called Grahi Buddha from Chaiya, not far to the south of Tenasserim. It is of uncertain date, but probably belongs to the 12th-14th centuries.⁸ Coedès considered the language to be pure Cambodian, but described the script as resembling Javanese Kawi. He concluded that the ancient country of Grahi, within which this inscription lay, "bien qu'étant de civilisation ou tout au moins de langue cambodgienne, ne relevait pas, au point de vue politique, du royaume khmer".⁹

5) Wolters, O., "The Khmer King at Basan (1371-3) and the Restoration of the Cambodian Chronology During the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", *Asia Major*, 12, 1 (1966), pp. 44-89.

6) *ibid.*, p. 73.

7) Coedès, G., "Une Nouvelle Inscription d'Ayuthya", *JSS (Journal of the Siam Society)* 35(1), Feb. 1944, pp. 73-76; and "Nouvelles Données Epigraphiques sur l'histoire de l'Indochine Centrale", *JA (Journal Asiatique)* CCXLVI (2), 1958, pp. 125-142.

8) Coedès, G., "Le Royaume de Çrivijaya", *BEFEO (Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient)*, 18(6), 1918, pp. 1-36.

Coedès, G., "A propos de la chute du Royaume de Çrivijaya", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, 83 (1927), p. 459.

Dupont, Pierre, "Variétés Archéologiques II, le Bouddha de Grahi et l'Ecole de C'āiya", *BEFEO* XLII (1942), pp. 105-113.

de Casparis, J.G., "The Date of the Grahi Buddha", *JSS* LV(1), January 1967, pp. 31-40.

Manit Vallibhotama, "Sinlapa samai uthong", pp. 1-42 in an untitled collection of three articles published by the Thai Fine Arts Department for the occasion of the Royal Inauguration of the National Museum on May 25, 2510. In this article the writer attempts to show that there are many Thai words in the

Furthermore, in mid-14th century, when Angkor had already begun its decline, and just one hundred years before the date of the Tenasserim inscriptions, some of the royal inscriptions of Sukhothai were still in Khmer.¹⁰

Still later, in the 15th and 16th centuries Khmer was used for a number of other inscriptions of the Tenasserim type which have been found in Ayutthayan monuments and cannot be in any way connected with Cambodian princes.¹¹

More evidence along these lines is the *phra tamra barom rachuthit phu'a kalpana* of 1698 from Phatthalung, a royal document granting land and servants to certain temples in the provinces of Phatthalung and Nakhon Sithammarat and written in both Thai and Khmer.¹² Although the Khmer text is written in a script "entirely different from any known to have been used in Cambodia, and which exhibits a peculiar mixture of Grantha, Cambodian, and Siamese elements",¹³ it is certainly a document emanating from the court of Ayutthaya and includes the full titles of the reigning king, Bedrājā.

The Cambodian alphabet also occasionally retained its prestige even when the Thai language was used, as can be seen from the Dansai inscription of 1562 recording a treaty between Ayutthaya and Vientiane in which the Ayutthayan side utilized the Khmer script.¹⁴

inscription on the Grahi Buddha. However, the words cited in his list on p. 16 are either Khmer words whose Thai equivalents have the same initial consonant, such as *noh* and *neh* (Thai *nān*, *nī*) or isolated syllables taken out of their context in the inscription and arbitrarily given a meaning to make them appear Thai. While in the former case linguistic research may eventually show some relationship between the Khmer and Thai words, *noh* and *neh* ("that", "this") appear in Khmer inscriptions long before there is any possibility of Thai influence, and it must be definitely stated that the Grahi inscription contains no Thai words.

9) Coedès, G., "Le Royaume de Çrivijaya", p. 35.

10) Coedès, G., *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam*, première partie, Bangkok 1924, especially no. 4.

11) These inscriptions are discussed below. See pp. 61-3 and note 35.

12) *Prachum phra tamra barom rachuthit phu'a kalpana samai ayuthaya phak 1* (Collected Royal Decrees Establishing Religious Foundations in the Ayuthaya Period Part 1), Commission for the Publication of Historical, Cultural and Archeological Records, Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok 2510. This will be cited as *Kalpana*.

13) Coedès, G., *The Vajirañāna National Library of Siam*, Bangkok, 1924, pp. 30-31.

14) Finot, L., "Notes d'épigraphie XIV, les inscriptions du musée de Hanoi", BEFEO 15(2), pp. 1-38, "Stèle de Dansai", pp. 28-36.

Thus whether or not one can see a reason for Cambodia and its language to enjoy such prestige, the objective fact as shown by various original documents is that the use of Cambodian as an official, or court language in the central Thai area antedated Angkorean domination, declined only gradually, and did not disappear until the end of the 17th century.

To return to the Tenasserim inscriptions and their meaning: as to script they are written in a standard Cambodian alphabet very similar to that used in the Dansai inscription and in Angkorean inscriptions of the 16th to 18th centuries,¹⁵ although at least three different styles of writing may be discerned.¹⁶ Of course, script does not tell us too much, for, as we have seen, that of the Phatthalung document of indisputably Ayutthayan origin is unique.

Coedès felt that the near identity of the royal titles contained in the inscriptions with certain titles from inscriptions at Angkor was strong evidence for connecting them with a Cambodian prince, and indeed the titles are an important element in the analysis for they make up nearly the entire content of the inscriptions. Now the limited number of words which went into the formation of royal titles results in a situation in which one can find some similarity between almost any two chosen from anywhere in Southeast Asia; but royal titles were not chosen haphazardly and each court had patterns peculiar to it which tended to be maintained over considerable time. Thus Coedès speaks of the title "Śrī Dharmarājā" being particular to the princes reigning at Ligor (Nakhon Sithammarat) and being absent from documents relating to the kings of Śrīvijaya¹⁷ who favored the title "Mahārājā".¹⁸ The latter title was also frequently used at Chiangmai¹⁹ but apparently never at Ayutthaya, and the kings of Sukhothai seem to have favored the title "Mahādharmarājā". The importance of patterns in royal titles has also been emphasized by de Casparis in his discussion of the Grahi Buddha.²⁰

15) *Silā cūru'k Nagara Vatta, Inscriptions Modernes d'Angkor*, Buddhist Institute, Phnom Penh, 1936. No plates of the inscriptions are included. The writer bases his statement on the nature of the script on personal observation.

16) I wish to thank the Archeological Survey of Burma for providing me with photographs of the Tenasserim inscriptions.

17) *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, Deuxième Partie*, Bangkok 1961, p. 25.

18) Coedès, G., "Le Royaume de Śrīvijaya", p. 35.

19) For examples see inscriptions nos. 68, 71, 72, 73, in *Prachum sila cūru'k phak thi 3* (Collected Inscriptions Part III), Bangkok, Office of the Prime Minister, 2510.

20) de Casparis, *op. cit.*

If we recognize then that Southeast Asian royal titles fall into patterns and are confronted with inscriptions containing little else but titles a close analysis is necessary, and in comparing them with titles from other sources the degree of similarity is crucial.

I should like, therefore, in addition to the late inscriptions of Angkor Vat mentioned by Coedès,²¹ to introduce the royal titles of three more documents for comparison. These are the inscription of Vat Culāmaṇī in Phitsanulok, in Thai, and erected by an undoubtedly Ayutthayan ruler, King Nārāy, in 1681 A.D.,²² the Phatthalung *Kalpana*, referred to above, and an inscription from Phichit, in Thai and dated 842 (1480 A.D.)²³

In order to facilitate the comparison I have listed below the titles used in the six documents in question. Line I is from the Angkor inscription of 1546, line II is from the Angkor inscription of 1564, line III contains the titles from Tenasserim, line IV those of Vat Culāmaṇī, line V those of *Kalpana*, and Line VI contains the titles from the Phichit inscription. The transcription of *Kalpana* is according to the Khmer version.

21) Coedès, G., "Deux bas-reliefs tardifs d'Angkor Vat", JA 1962, pp. 235-243.

22) *Prachum Phongsavadan* (Collected Chronicles) Part I, National Library Edition, pp. 139-143; and *Prachum Chotmai het samai ayuthaya*, Bangkok, Office of the Prime Minister, 2510, pp. 32-33. In a discussion of methods of calculating dates in early Thai documents Prof. David K. Wyatt, in his article, "The Thai 'Kaṭa Maṇḍiarapāla' and Malacca", JSS LV(2), July 1967, pp. 279-286, implied that the inscription, or part of it, was erected by King Paramatrailokanātha in 826 (1464), the date with which the text begins. Examination of the original inscription, however, shows that it was all written in the same script at the same time and therefore belongs, at the earliest, to the last date cited, *cula* era 1043 (A.D. 1681). The earlier dates are simply historical references such as one would find in a chronicle.

23) *Prachum sila charu'k phak thi 4* (Collected Inscriptions Part 4), inscription no. 108, pp. 138-139. Although the date of this inscription would seem to be conclusive proof that the titles in question were those of Paramatrailokanātha, the peculiar structure of the text does not permit us to draw that conclusion. The body of the inscription apparently records the dedication, by a group of monks and laymen, of a number of Buddha images, and is written in Thai but in the Khmer alphabet. This is followed, without any logical connection, by the royal titles written in the Thai alphabet. Thus it is not certain that the two parts were engraved at the same time, and this inscription is evidence only that the titles were part of Ayutthayan tradition but not for their use by any particular king.

I	braḥ pāda stac	braḥ rājaonkāra	parammarājādhirāja
II	vraḥ pāda saṁtac	vraḥ rājaonkāra	parammarājādhirāja
III		saṁtac braḥ	
IV	braḥ śrī sarrbejña	saṁtec braḥ	
V	paḥ śrī sarrbej	stec paḥ	
VI		braḥ	

I	rāmādhīpati	parama	cakrabartt[i]
II			
III	rāmādhīpati śrīsrīndra	parama	cakrabartti
IV	rāmādhīpatī śrīsindra	parama	mahācākṛabarrtīśvara
V	rāmādhīpatī śrīsindra	paramma	mahācākṛabarrtisaravara
VI	rāmādhīpatī śrīsindra	parama	cākṛabarrtī

I	rāja		
II			
III	rājādhīrāja rāmeśvara	dharmarāja	tejo jayabarma
IV	rājādhīrāja	meśvara dharmikarāja	tejo jāyaparma
V	rājādhīrāja rāmesvara	dharmiggharāja	tejo jāiyabarmhma
VI	rājādhīrāja rāmesvara	dharmmīkarāja	tejo jāiyabarrma

I			
II			ta paramma pavitra
III	debātideba	tribhubaṇādhīpeśa	parama pabitra
IV	debātideba	tribhūvanādhīpeśa	loka jeṣṭha, etc.
V	debhātideba	tribhūvanādhīpeśa	loka jeṭha, etc.
VI	debātideba	tribhūvanādhīpesa	parama pabitra

It is obvious that the documents to which the titles from Tenasserim show the greatest resemblance are not those from Angkor, but rather those from Vat Culāmaṇī, Phatthalung and Phichit. In fact, with the exception of *braḥ śrī sarrbejñā*, which apparently only came into common use in the 16th century,²⁴ they are almost identical, whereas their resemblance to the inscriptions of Angkor Vat is only incidental, the type of resemblance one might find among many unrelated inscriptions. It would then seem to follow that if such comparison of titles is accepted as significant, proper use of evidence requires us to draw the following conclusions: the titles of the Tenasserim inscriptions, since they resemble those still used by Ayutthayan kings, and in Thai as well as Khmer-language documents, in 1480, 1681 and 1689 more than those found in any Angkorean inscription, were probably typical titles of Ayutthayan rulers.²⁵ The inscriptions further indicate the use of Cambodian as an official language at that time. The title "Paramatrilokanātha", which tradition has assigned preeminently to a reign in the middle of the 15th century, although it is believed to have been used by other rulers as well,²⁶ would thus not have been in contemporary use as part of the royal titles in that reign. The fact that the titles of the Tenasserim inscriptions are so different from those now associated with "King Paramatrilokanātha" should not surprise us when we realize that

- 24) Thai historiography has retrospectively given the title "Śrī Sarbejñā I" to the king known in the chronicles as Mahādharmarāja, but the inscription from Pichit dated 1959 (1415) and which is reproduced below, shows that the title may have been in use earlier.
- 25) Some of the old Thai laws give further evidence that these titles were part of old Ayutthayan tradition, although I have not included them here since the laws are not original documents in the strict sense. The royal titles in four of the laws include the main elements of the Tenasserim titles plus other expressions. This is most clearly seen in the law *răp fôn* dated 1899 (A.D. 1355) in which the titles are those of Tenasserim plus *braḥ buddha cau yū hua* at the end. The other laws which show these titles are the law on *dāsa* dated 1359 (A.D. 1437), the law on *dāsa* dated 1387 (A.D. 1465), and the *pet srec* law dated 1146 (A.D. 1784). Note that the A.D. dates calculated here do not take into account irregularities in the animal years of the laws or the possible existence of any era other than the *cūla*, *śaka* and Buddhist eras.
- 26) H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rachanubhab, *Athibai phra nam phra cau phaen din* (Explanation of Kings' Names), pp. 6-7.

the titles from Vat Culāmaṇī and *Kalpana*, which are contemporary documents and thus accurate for the periods in question, are quite different from the titles found in the chronicles for the kings generally known as “Nārāy” and “Bedrājā”.²⁷

Any other interpretation must be based on external evidence which will outweigh the testimony of the inscriptions. The earlier studies of these inscriptions used evidence from the Cambodian chronicles which state that in 1476 A.D. King Dharmarājā, in conflict with his brother and nephew, asked for Siamese help and the rebellious princes were taken away to captivity in Siam.²⁸ From this Coedès, followed by Wolters, deduced that one of the captive princes was set up as a vassal ruler in Tenasserim and that the inscriptions show the date of the event to be off by about 15 years.

This explanation, however, runs into some serious objections on political and sociological grounds, even if we assume that the story of captive princes is true in its main details. Tenasserim at the time, as both Thai chronicles and European travelers state, was a dependency of Ayutthaya and was an important seaport with a large volume of overland

27) See the titles of Nārāy and Bedrājā in the *Royal Autograph* recension of the Ayutthayan chronicle, several editions, sixth ed., 2511, pp. 441 and 498.

28) I follow, for these events, the *Nong chronicle* of which the oldest extant version in Cambodian, entitled *Robal Khsat*, is among the Doudart de Lagrée manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. It was translated into French by Francis Garnier and published in *Journal Asiatique*, oct-nov 1871 and aout-sept 1872. A Thai translation made in 1869 has been published in *Prachum Phongsavadan* part 1. Another chronicle, generally referred to as the *Ang Eng Fragment*, has slightly different details, but which do not affect the interpretation offered here. See Coedès, “Essai de classification des documents historiques Cambodgiens, etc.”, BEFEO 18(9), pp. 15-28, and the Thai version in *Prachum Phongsavadan* part 4. I do not take into consideration the version of A. Leclère, *Histoire du Cambodge*, for its greater detail has been achieved by an uncritical synthesis of information from different sources.

In “Tenasserim”, p. 208, n. 12, Coedès unaccountably wrote that the *Nupparot Chronicle* places this event in 1473 rather than 1476, the date found in the *Nong Chronicle*. In fact, the *Nupparot* versions in both Phnom Penh and Bangkok have *śaka* 1398=A.D. 1476. See Institut Bouddhique, Phnom Penh, mss. no. 1364 and National Library, Bangkok, Phongsawadan Khamen 45/“], ๗] 111.

trade crossing the peninsula to the east coast and then on to Ayutthaya.²⁹ Thus Tenasserim was probably rich, populous and powerful. Now recent research on early Thai administration tends to show that high central government officials and provincial governors, especially those distant from the capital, were quite resistant to genuine central control, passed their offices on from one family member to another and were only with difficulty replaced by newcomers appointed by the court.³⁰ This would have been particularly true in Tenasserim, an important, rich and powerful seaport. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine that the Ayutthayan king, even had he been able, would have wished to take a troublesome prince from Cambodia and set him up to govern a sensitive border area such as Tenasserim where he would have been a complete stranger without any local clientele for support. Such a policy did not become feasible until the advent of more rapid communications in the 19th and 20th centuries. Furthermore, had such a policy been attempted, one may ask whether the King of Ayutthaya would have given his vassal in

29) In fact, there is no European evidence before the beginning of the 16th century, and I am assuming that the situation had been the same throughout the preceding 30-40 years. See the following:

de Campos, Dr. Joaquim, "Early Portuguese Accounts of Thailand", JSS 32(1), 1940, pp. 1-27. See p. 5.

Fredericke, Caesar, "The voyage and travell of M. Caesar Fredericke, etc.", in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages & Discoveries of the English Nation*, Glasgow 1904, vol. V, pp. 365-449. See p. 412.

Guehler, Ulrich, "The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema", JSS 36, pp. 113-150. See p. 125.

Hutchinson, E.W., *Adventurers in Siam in the Seventeenth Century*, London 1940, p. 12.

30) Bunnag, Tej, "The Provincial Administration of Siam from 1892 to 1915: A Study of the Creation, the Growth, the Achievements, and the Implications for Modern Siam of the Ministry of the Interior Under Prince Damrong Rachanuphap". A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford, 1968, pp. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 41, 55.

Vickery, Michael, "Thai Regional Elites and the Reforms of King Chulalongkorn", *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 29(4), August 1970, pp. 863-881.

Wyatt, David K., "Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand", *Journal of Southeast Asian History* vol. 9(2), September 1968, pp. 208-228.

Tenasserim a *king's* titles (since it is now clear that the titles in question were such), especially when neither of the Cambodian princes in question any longer had the right to such titles in Cambodia.³¹

Thus there is no external evidence strong enough to outweigh the testimony of the inscriptions themselves that the titles in question belonged to one or more Ayutthayan rulers, and we must reject any interpretation which attempts to relate them to an exiled Cambodian prince.

Nevertheless, their interest does not end with the proof that they were Ayutthayan, and I should like in what follows to engage in some discussion of the type of document represented by the Tenasserim inscriptions and to situate them with respect to others of the same type which have been published since Coedès' article appeared.

At the time Coedès wrote apparently only one other inscription of this type was known—a very brief text on a gold plate found at Vat Rājapūra.³² It consisted of a title inscribed vertically along the left-hand margin, another title written across the face of the plate and then the word *oy*, "give (to)" in Khmer. This is the basic structure of the Tenasserim inscriptions and the others of this type which have subsequently been published. Coedès, adopting the opinion of the late Maha Cham Thongkhamwan, a well-known Thai epigraphist, decided that the title on the left represented the original rank of the recipient of the inscribed metal plate and the title written across the face was that conferred by the inscription. The word *oy* at the end signified that the

31) If statements in the Cambodian chronicles are accepted, at the date of the two princes' expatriation their brother and uncle, King Dharmarāja, had been on the throne for eight years. On the other hand the titles for a governor of Tenasserim are a matter of record. They were *okyā jayādhīpatī śrī ranarāṭṭh' jaya abhaibhīriyaparākramabhāhu*. See the Lingat edition of the old Thai laws, *Pramuan kothmai rachakan thi 1*, p. 266. That this title was actually in use is proved by a letter from the governor of Tenasserim to the King of Denmark written in 1621. See H.H. Prince Dhani Nivat and Maj. E. Seidenfaden, "Early Trade Relations between Denmark and Siam", JSS 31(1), 1939, pp. 1-17. See p. 5.

32) Coedès, "Tenasserim", p. 205. "Rājapūra", like "Paramatrailokanātha", is a conventional form which I shall continue to use because of its familiarity. As a matter of good historical method the site should be designated according to the earliest document in which it is mentioned, which at the present time is the *Hlvān Prasro'th* chronicle, *sub anno* 786, where it is called "Vat Rājapūṇa".

title was conferred by the king.³³ In fact, this method of conferring rank is mentioned in a post-Angkorean, probably 15th-century, Cambodian lithic inscription which states that the king gave a title (*oy nāmakara*) to a monk and issued a gold plate (*suvaṇapata*), presumably with the title inscribed on it.³⁴

Since Coedès wrote a number of other inscriptions of the same type have made their appearance in a collection of documents published by the Commission for Publishing Historical, Cultural and Archeological Documents.³⁵ In chronological order they are :

- gold plate from *braḥ parama dhātu*, Phichit, dated 1959 (A.D. 1415)
- gold plate from *braḥ parama dhātu*, Suphanburi, „ 1.5. („ [1435])
- gold plate from unknown site „ 1365 („ 1445)
- gold plate from unknown site „ 1410 („ 1488)
- gold plate from *vat brah śrī sarrbejñā*,
Ayutthaya, „ 1416 („ 1494)
- silver plate from “an old chedi”, Phitsanulok, 1487 („ 1565)

All except the last are in Khmer, and it, while clearly intended as a Thai-language inscription, still contains the Khmer word, *oy*.³⁶

33) *ibid.*

34) Coedès, G., “Prāḥ Thāt Khvān”, IC (*Inscriptions du Cambodge*), vol. VII, pp. 37-39.

35) *Prachum Chotmai het samai ayutthaya phak thi 1*. Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok 2510. Cited hereafter as PCSA. pp. 26, 28, 30, 31, 79, 80, 81. This collection does not contain facsimiles of the original plates, but reproduces Thai transcriptions made many years ago. For a discussion of these documents see my review in JSS July 1972.

For the restoration of the date of the Suphanburi plate see the note on page 28, PCSA.

36) The elements which distinguish the first five inscriptions as Khmer are the names for the waxing and waning of the moon, *ket* and *roc*, and the conjunction *ni* in the inscription from Suphanburi. The expressions *mān pandval/pandul* and *oy* are also pure Khmer, but the former eventually passed into Thai royal administrative vocabulary and the latter is also found in the unique Thai plate of the present collection. The decisively Thai characteristics of the latter, from Phitsanulok, are *tvay* (ทว) following *anumodanā* and *ke* (แก่) following *prahsiddhi*. *Tithi*, in place of the Khmer words *ket* or *roc*, although a Pali word, is characteristic of Thai rather than Khmer epigraphy. Apart from these few expressions and certain words such as the names of the animal years, *braḥ/vraḥ* and *samtac*, which are common to the epigraphy of both languages, the entire content of the inscriptions consists of Sanskrit and Pali expressions.

In order to study the related structure of these inscriptions and to provide evidence for a reinterpretation of one of the Tenasserim inscriptions I have provided below a word-by-word juxtaposition of ten of the texts in question, leaving out the one from Vat Rājapūraṇa as too brief to be useful. In this arrangement the order is not chronological, but by type, beginning with the shortest of each type. First come the three inscriptions conferring lay rank on males, then the two inscriptions concerning females, and finally the five texts conferring monastic rank. Thus they are in the following order, with dates given in the era of the originals.

I. Unknown site	1410
II. Tenasserim	1384
III. Tenasserim	1385
IV. Tenasserim	1387
V. Ayutthaya	1416
VI. Phichit	1959
VII. Suphanburi	1.5.
VIII. Unknown site	1365
IX. Phitsanulok	1487
X. Tenasserim	1388

All of inscriptions begin with chronological details, then all but no. X continue with an expression indicating an order emanating from the king followed by the royal titles in full or abbreviated form, and then in those dealing with lay persons, male or female, the expression *brah̃/vrah̃ bara/vara prasiddhi*, which Coedès rendered, “conférant”, “daignant conférer”, and “daignant octroyer”.³⁹ Finally there is the title (*nāmakara*) conferred and the words *nāmakara oy*. The inscriptions dealing with religious titles are rather different. Omitting no. VIII which is too brief to be useful, we see that in VI, VII, and IX, following the king’s titles, there is an expression, *sucarit sraddhā anumodanā*, “avec un coeur rempli de vertu, de foi et de satisfaction”, according to Coedès’ translation of no. X,⁴⁰ after which there is the term *buddhaṭṭikā*, meaning

39) Coedès, “Tenasserim”, p. 206.

40) *ibid.*

I.	śubhamāstu	1410	śaka	mamī ³⁷	nākṣātra	pāncamī ket	śravaṇa	cāndavāra	śubhamahuttī	mān	pāndūl	braḥ	rājaoṅkāra	
II.	[śu]bhamastu	1384	[śa]ka ³⁸	mamiya	nakṣatra	daśamī roc		aṅgārābāra	śubhamuhūrtta	mā[n pa]ndval		vraḥ	rājaoṅkāra	saṃtac
III.	śubhamastu	1385	śaka	mamē	[nakṣatra] ket	phālgua	ādityavāra		mān	pandval	braḥ	rājaoṅkāra	saṃtac
IV.	śubhamastu	13[87]	śaka	rkā	nakṣatra	saṣṭhī ket	puṣya	ādityavāra		[mān pa]ndval		vraḥ	rājaoṅkāra	saṃtac
V.	śubhamāstu	1416	śaka	khāl	nākṣātra	dvādaśī ko't	vaiśākhyā	budhavāra	śubhamuhūrtta	mān	pāndur	vraḥ	rājaoṅkāra	saṃtec
VI.	śubhamāstu	1959	śaka	mame	nākṣātra	navamī roc	kāṭṭika	buddhavāra	śubhamuhūrtti	mān	pāndūl	braḥ	rājaoṅkāra	braḥ śrī sarbbājña saṃtac
VII.	śubhamāstu	1.5.	śaka	thoḥ	nākṣātra	piy ket				mān	pāndūl	braḥ	rājaoṅkāra	stec
VIII.	śubhamāstu	1365	śaka	kur	nākṣātra	ṣaṣṭhī ket		vṛhāspatīvāra	śubhamahūrti					
IX.	śubhamāstu	1487	śaka	chalū	nākṣātra	puṣyamāsa sukkapākkha	dvādasamī tithī	śukravāra		mān		braḥ	rāja . . . vānī	stec
X.	śubhamastu	1388	śaka	ca	nakṣatra	āsādha	dvādasi roc	candabāra	acca . . . subhamahūrtti	mān	buddhaṭṭika			saṃtac braḥ
					chronological details			chronological details		there was		a royal order		royal titles
											monk's statement			

I.														
II.		braḥ	rāmādhipati	śrī	śrīndra	parama	cakrabartti	rājādhi[rāja]	rāmeśvara	dharma[rāja]	tejo jayabarmmadebātideba	tribhubaṇādhipesa	[pa]rama	pabitra
III.		braḥ	rāmādhipati	śrī	śrīndra	parama	cakrabartti	rājādhira	rāme[śvara]	rājādhi[rāja]	tejo jayavarmmadebātideba	tribhubaṇādhipesa		pavitra
IV.														pavitra
V.														pavitra
VI.														pabitra
VII.		parama	rājādhipati	śrī		mahā	cakrabartti	rāja						nu braḥ rāmeśvara
VIII.														
IX.		mahādharma	rājādhipati								śrī yud . . .	parama	pabitra	
X.	garu		rāmādhipati	śrī	śrīndra	parama	cakrabartti	rājopadhyāya		saṅgharāja	saṅghapariṇāyaka	tilakaratnamahāsvāmī	śrī parakramabāhu	nu braḥ saṅgha
										titles				titles

I.														
II.														
III.														
IV.														
V.														
VI.						sucariṭ	śrāddhā	anumodanā		buddhaṭṭikā	saṃtāc	braḥ		saṅgharāja
VII.						sucariṭ	śrāddhā	anumodanā	nu	buddhaṭṭikā	stec	braḥ	garū	cuḍamaṇī śrī saṅgharāja nāyaka tilakarāṭṭnamahāsvāmī
VIII.														
IX.						sucariṭ	. . . dāv	anumodanā	tvay	braḥ	buddhaṭṭikā	saṃtec	braḥ	mahāsāmi
X.	phon	nu	ba	khun	śrī śrīsudassana	rājādhira	mān	sucarica	sarddhā	anumodanā	thvāy			anurāja
					titles	heart filled with	virtue [and] faith	rejoices in		statement of religious official			titles of religious official	

I.		braḥ	bara	praśiddhi		
II.		braḥ	bara	prasiddhi		
III.		braḥ	bara	prasiddhi		
IV.		vraḥ	vara	prasiddhi		
V.		vraḥ	vara	praśiddhi		
VI.		pabitra	braḥ	bara	praśiddhi	
VII.	parama	rājācāry		braḥ	bara	praśiddhi
VIII.				braḥ	vara	praśiddhi
IX.		pabitra	braḥ	bara	praśiddhi	kē
X.				braḥ	bara	prasiddhi
					confers	

[new title] nāmakara oy

Note : Dotted lines indicate something missing from the original, straight lines an expansion of the shorter inscriptions to make their elements coincide with the same elements of the longer texts.

37) Mamī, year of the horse, is incorrect. 1410 was a monkey year. The editor of the collection was also in error in reading the mamī of the original transcription as mahmē, goat year.

38) Coedès omitted śaka in his transcription, but it is visible in the photograph of the original plate.

“statement of a monk”, followed by the titles of the monastic official who issued the *buddhaṭṭikā*, in two cases a *saṅgharāja* and in the third a *mahāsāmi anurāja*. It should be noted that *anumodanā*, in its Khmer usage, means “to rejoice in something”, or, by extension, “to approve”, although Coedès seems to have rendered it by its Sanskrit gloss, as a substantive meaning “satisfaction”. This is a good enough solution when no. X is taken by itself, for there is nothing “to approve” or “rejoice in” in what follows. However, in nos. VI, VII, and IX it is clear that *anumodanā* is a transitive verb indicating that the king “rejoiced in” or “approved” the *buddhaṭṭikā*. Finally there is, as in the other inscriptions, the expression meaning “confer”.

It appears then that the granting of titles, whether lay or ecclesiastical, was a royal prerogative, and that when a monk was to be promoted a high religious official, such as a *saṅgharāja*, first issued a *buddhaṭṭikā* to which the king, “with a heart filled with virtue, etc”, agreed and then conferred the title. This order of procedure also appears in the above-mentioned Cambodian inscription in which, “the head of the *saṅgha* and all the members of the *saṅgha* conducted this great man . . . to receive ordination. Then [my italics] . . . the king gave a title (*mahārāja oy nāmakara*) and honored him with a gold leaf which named him . . .”.⁴¹

Only no. X shows a serious divergence from this structure. It seems to be a declaration emanating directly from a high-ranking religious official and conferring a monastic title without benefit of royal concurrence. It also, along with no. VII, involves other people in the declaration as can be seen from the phrases, “*nu brah rāmeśvara*” and “*nu brah saṅgha . . . phoṇ nu ba khun śrī śrīsudassana*”. The different structure of no. X cannot be explained as the result of an evolution in style for chronologically it falls nearly in the middle of the series of ten inscriptions and is definitely anomalous. Neither can the difference be attributed to the supposedly high rank of the religious official in question, for in no. VII, tentatively dated about 30 years earlier, the *buddhaṭṭikā*

41) See note 34 above.

of a monk of comparable rank was subordinated to the king's approval in the usual manner.⁴²

It is this peculiarity of inscription no. X which I wish to consider in some detail. The text of this inscription, which in Coedès' original article was no. III, is as follows :

(1) s'ubham astu 1388 s'aka ca nakṣatra āsādha dvādasī roc
candabāra acca - (2) - - - subbhamahūrtti mān buddhat [i] kā
saṃtac braḥ garu rāmādhi (3) pati s'rīs' rīndraparamacakra-
bartti rājopadhyāya saṅgharāja saṅgha (4) pariṇāyaka tilaka-
ratna mahāsvāmī s'rīparakramabāhu nu braḥ saṅgha (5) - - -
phoṇ nu ba khun s'rīs' rīsudassanarājādhirāja mān sucarica
sarddhā (6) anumodanā thvāy braḥ bara pras'iddhi braḥ
mahāthera sudassa [na] debā (7) cāryya nāmakara oy

Coedes translated this :

Salut ! En 1388, année du Chien, douzième jour de la lune décroissante d'Asādha, lundi ... à l'heure faste, il y eut une déclaration de Saṃtac Braḥ Guru, maître spirituel du (roi) Rāmādhipati S'rīs'rīndraparamacakrabartirāja, Saṅgharāja Saṅghaparināyaka Tilakaratnamahāsvāmī S'rī Parakramabāhu, avec tous les membres du Saṅgha et Ba Khun S'rīs'rī Sudassana Rājādhirāja, avec un coeur rempli de vertu, de foi et de satisfaction, conférant le titre de Braḥ Mahāthera Sudassana Debācārya à ...

The section to which I wish to call attention is underlined.

In this translation the king's names, preceded in the other inscriptions by *saṃtac pavitra* or *saṃtac braḥ*—rendered by Coedès "Sa Majesté"—are bereft of any honorific title at all, while the high title *saṃtac* is given to the *braḥ garu*, "holy or royal teacher". Of course *saṃtac* is appropriate for a high ranking monk, but it should also be used before

42) The titles of the two monks are as follows :

Inscription VII : stec braḥ garu _____ cuḍāmaṇī

Inscription X : saṃtac braḥ garu (rāmādhipati, etc.) _____

VII : _____ śrī saṅgharāja _____ nāyaka tilakarātṇa

X : rājopadhyāya saṅgharāja saṅghaparināyaka tilakaratna

VII : mahāsvāmī _____ parama rājācāry

X : mahāsvāmī śrī parakramahāhu _____

the king's title. A second point to consider is the title *rājopadhyāya*, which Coedès, taking it as a *tatpuruṣa* compound, translated as "maitre spirituel du (roi)". However, Khmer syntax requires that *rājopadhyāya* in this sense precede the king's title *rāmādhīpati*, etc. For Coedès' translation to be correct then, the inscription should read, "... *saṃtac braḥ garu rājopadhyāya* [*saṃtac braḥ*] *rāmādhīpati*, etc ...".⁴³

It is not necessary to take *rājopadhyāya* in this sense. It may also be construed as a *karmadhāraya* compound with the meaning, "royal spiritual master" or an "*upadhyāya* who is king", by analogy with *rājarṣi*, "à sage who is king" or "rishi of royal descent"⁴⁴, with the Thai term *rājupathambh* (ราชูปถัมภ์), "royal patron or benefactor"⁴⁵, and with *rājabhikṣu*, "royal bhikṣu", found in an early Khmer inscription.⁴⁶

- 43) To show that such was the structure of Old Khmer as well as of the modern language I cite the following examples from Angkor period inscriptions. The underlined portions illustrate the construction under discussion, and to avoid confusion Coedès' italics have been omitted.

IC vol. III, pp. 180-192, "Stèle de Trapān Dón On", p. 184, "... *yeñ ta jmoḥ kaṃ kavīçvara khloñ vala çivaspada* ...". Translation, p. 189, "... nous ayant nom *kaṃ kavīçvara*, *khloñ vala de Çivaspada* ...".

IC vol. VI, pp. 154-164, "Inscriptions de Prāsāt Nāk Buos", p. 162, "... *mratañ çrī rājendrasīṃha ta vāppā steñ vrah tannot* ...". Translation, "... *mratañ* ... *père de Steñ Vrah Tañnot* ...".

BEFEO 43 (1943-46), pp. 56-154, "Les stèles de Sdók Kāk Thom, Phnom Sandak et Práh Vihār", G. Coedès et P. Dupont, p. 88, "... *kanmvay steñ añ çivakaivalya mvāy jmaḥ* ...", translation, "... *un neveu du steñ añ Çivakaivalya du nom de* ...".

ibid., p. 88, "... *steñ añ Vāmaçiva cau steñ añ Çivakaivalya* ...". Translation, "... *steñ añ Vāmaçiva, petit-neveu (cau) du steñ añ* ...".

ibid., "... *steñ añ Vāmaçiva jã çisya steñ añ Çivasoma ta jã guru vrah pāda Içvaraloka*". Translation, pp. 112, "Le *steñ añ Vāmaçiva* était élève du *steñ añ Çivasoma*, qui était *guru de S.M. Içvaraloka*". This last example is particularly relevant for our investigation of the Tenasserim inscription for it shows that when the title "guru" preceded the king's titles in the sense "guru of the king", the king's honorifics, *vrah pāda*, "His Majesty", were included between "guru" and the king's names.

- 44) Renou, Louis, *Grammaire Sanskrite Élémentaire*, Paris, 1963, p. 23. Monier-Williams, Sir Monier, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, p. 874.

- 45) McFarland, George Bradley, *Thai-English Dictionary*, Stanford and Oxford, 1944, p. 708.

- 46) Coedès, G., "Piliers de Hin K'ön", IC VI, pp. 74-78.

Thus due to the absence of *saṃtac braḥ* before *rāmādhīpati* and the position of *rājopadhyāya* it seems that the whole series of titles beginning with *saṃtac* and ending with *śrīparakramabāhu* must refer to the same person, that is “His Majesty (*saṃtac*) the royal teacher (*braḥ garu*) *rāmādhīpati* . . . the royal *upadhyāya*, *saṅgharāja*, leader of the *saṅgha* (*saṅghaparināyaka*)”, and the translation should be, “There was a statement by *saṃtac braḥ garu rāmādhīpati śrīśrīndra paramacakrabartti* the royal *upadhyāya*, etc”. The titles *parināyaka*, *tilakaratnamahāsvāmi* and *parakramabāhu* are shown by other documents to have been used for high-ranking monks.⁴⁷

Another noteworthy detail is that the inscription has the same phrase *sucarica sarddhā anumodanā*, which in the other inscriptions indicates approval of the *buddhaṭṭhā* just before the expression meaning “confer”. However, in this case *anumodanā* has no function, since the *buddhaṭṭhā* itself emanates from the author of the inscription. Its presence here suggests that in this inscription a standard formula was adapted to fit a special case.

As the reader must be aware the special case which I am suggesting lay behind this inscription is that of a king who was at the same time a high-ranking monk. This seems to be the only explanation for the deviations from standard practice contained in its text.

This explanation, however, presents a serious problem. The date of this inscription places it within the reign of the king known to the chronicles as Paramatrailokanātha, who according to both the chronicles and the inscription of Vat Culāmaṇi indeed became a monk, but for only eight months. Could he, in such a short period of time, have received such a high monastic rank? Certainly he could not today, but we may not therefore assume that it would have been impossible in the fifteenth century. Religious practices and the prerogatives of royalty have varied greatly over the centuries, and only contemporary documents can tell us

47) For instance, in *Kalpana*, p. 3.

about the situation in any given historical period. Sufficient documentation to prove the case one way or another does not seem to be available, but we do know, for instance, that the title "saṅgharāja" has had a variety of uses ranging from the very high status of the present day to perhaps no more than head of an individual vat.⁴⁸ For an earlier period, probably eighth century, a buddhist inscription from near Nakhon Ratchasima records the case of a "prince (or king)" Nṛpendrādhipativarman who became a monk with the titles *upadhyāya śrī rājabhikṣu* or *upadhyāya kamrateñ aṇ śrī rājabhikṣu*. This appears to be a very high title and made its holder, in fact, a *rājopadhyāya* in the sense I have given this term above, but there is no indication of the length of time he had spent as a monk.⁴⁹

If we admit the hypothesis that this inscription might be due to King Paramatrilokanātha as a monk, we can find some support for it in the *Hlvañ Prasro'th Chronicle* and the inscription of Vat Culāmaṇī.

According to the chronicle King Paramatrilokanātha became a monk at Vat Culāmaṇī sometime in the year 827 *cula* era (1465 A.D.), and remained there for eight months. There is no further entry in the chronicle until 830 (1468). The inscription of Vat Culāmaṇī itself, although erected in 1681 and thus not contemporary evidence, states that

48) The title "saṅgharāja", in present-day Thai and Cambodian usage is reserved for the heads of the clergy appointed by the king or chief of state. In the past it did not always have this meaning. In Cambodia, inscriptions at Angkor Vat between A.D. 1566 and 1744 (see note 15 above) show a plurality of saṅgharājas varying from two in 1566 (inscription 4, p. 13) to a maximum of sixteen in 1696 (inscription 37A, p. 83). In such a situation a saṅgharāja was probably no more than the head of an important vat. In his research on the Thai saṅgha Prince Damrong came to the conclusion that here too in early times there was a plurality of saṅgharājas. In his *History of the Saṅgha* (ตำนานคณะสงฆ์) he stated that in the Sukhothai period there was probably a saṅgharāja in each large vassal *mo'ang* (op. cit., p. 6), and he gave an extract from an Ayutthayan table of ranks (บันดูล) which shows several saṅgharājas in the later Ayutthayan period (op. cit., pp. 24-33). An inscription from Phayao shows two saṅgharājas in the same area, each attached to a different vat ("... saṅgharāja cau vat hlvañ... saṅgharāja cau vat ooy...", 11. 14-15, inscription no. 99, *Prachum sila čharu'k*, Part IV, pp. 82-85).

49) Coedès, G., "Piliers de Hin K'ön", IC VI, pp. 74-78.

King Paramatrailokanātha entered the vat in 827 in the eighth month, remained there for eight months and fifteen days and left in the fifth month. During that time, says the inscription, he was responsible for the ordaining of a large number of monks.⁵⁰

The date 827 (A.D. 1465) which the chronicle and the Vat Culāmaṇī inscription give to this event is only one year earlier than the date *śaka* 1388 (A.D. 1466) of the Tenasserim inscription. If indeed the latter emanates from King Paramatrailokanātha during his time in the monastery, a one-year difference in the sources is not surprising given the 220-year gap between the Tenasserim inscription and the two later documents.

There is also evidence to suggest that the king known as Paramatrailokanātha had unusually strong religious interests. For one thing, the name "Trailokanātha", which is apparently a popular appellation and not part of the contemporary royal titles, is usually reserved for the Buddha himself, and its application to a king would indicate a particularly saintly reputation. In addition to this, if the Vat Culāmaṇī inscription provides accurate information, the king took a very large number of other persons with him when he entered the monastery. This would help to explain the title *rājopadhyāya* of the Tenasserim inscription, for *upadhyāya* in its Pali form, *upajjhāya*, means in both Thai and Khmer not merely "spiritual master", but is a term for one of the two principal officiating monks in the ordination ceremony. In these circumstances the high religious titles found in the inscription seem less astonishing.

In conclusion then we may state the following: since the Tenasserim inscriptions were first published sufficient evidence has appeared to show that the royal titles they contain must have belonged to an Ayutthayan king, and if the *Hlvañ Prasroṭh* chronology is accurate this king must have been Paramatrailokanātha. One of the inscriptions seems clearly to be in need of reinterpretation, and I have suggested

50) See both sources in the various editions of *Pračhum Phongsawadan* (Collected Chronicles), Part I.

that it was issued by the same king during the time he was in monkhood at Vat Culāmaṇī. Moreover, these inscriptions, together with other documents cited above, show that the Khmer language still held a position of prestige at the Ayutthayan court. What the exact position was is not entirely clear. The plates from Pichit, Suphanburi, Vāt Rājapūraṇa, Vat Braḥ Śrī Sarrbejña and Tenasserim show a widespread distribution and the use of Khmer cannot be explained as due to local linguistic peculiarity. Since these documents are all of a single type, metal plates conferring titles, one might have been tempted to conclude that Khmer was used only in this context as a ritualized royal formula. The existence of the *Kalpana*, however, shows that this is not necessarily true. For the moment the question must be left open until more evidence is obtained.

A final point of interest is that even though the Tenasserim inscriptions did not emanate from a Cambodian prince, they do show a Cambodian connection other than the language itself. They contain, as Coedès briefly noted,⁵¹ elements of Angkor-period titles which disappeared in Cambodia in the post-Angkor Period, but which were apparently maintained in the Angkorean successor state of Ayutthaya. These elements are *śrī śrīndra* and *jayavarmmadeba*. The first is found in the titles of two of the last recorded kings of Angkor, *śrī śrīndravarmmadeva* (1295/6-1307) and *śrī śrīndra jayavarmma* (1307-1327) and in the high ecclesiastical title of the same period, *śrī śrīndra maulideva*; and the second was the principal title of Jayavarman VII.⁵² Certain other main elements of the Tenasserim titles such as *rāmādhīpati*, *cakrabartti*,

51) Tenasserim, p. 208.

52) *Varman* is another case of European scholars adopting a conventional form to render elements which varied in the original texts. The word itself is a purely theoretical form made possible by the rules of Sanskrit grammar, although it seems that the late Louis Damais was the only scholar to take note of this. See his review of Prof. Dr. Poerbatjaraka's *Riwajat Indonesia* in BEFEO 48(2), 1957, "Bibliographie", p. 608, n. 2.

In Khmer-language texts this title always appears as *varma/varmma* or *barmal/barmma*, and the king known conventionally as Jayavarman VII, like most of the members of his dynasty, preferred *-varmadeva*. For all of these titles see Coedès' index to the inscriptions, IC vol. VIII.

and *rājādhirāja*, are never found in Angkor inscriptions of the classical period as part of a ruler's principal titles, but they appear at early dates in both Thai and Mon documents.⁵³ Their occurrence in the late Angkor inscriptions cited by Coedès shows only that by the 16th century Ayutthayan influence had made itself felt at the Cambodian court.

53) Their use in Ayutthaya is well known. For a Mon example see the "Kalyāṇī-sīma Inscriptions", *Epigraphia Birmanica*, vol. III, part II, pp. 236, 238, 265, where the king known to posterity as "Dhammaceti" is entitled *Rāmādhīpati-mahārāja* and *Rāmādhīpati parama mahādhammarājādhirāja*.