

Epigraphic and Historical Studies No. 21
THE SECOND OLDEST KNOWN WRITING IN SIAMESE

by

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Inscription No. 107 is engraved on one face of a slab of greenish stone 28 centimetres (cm) wide and 6 cm thick; in its present broken condition, the maximum height is 52 cm. It was discovered at an unrecorded date in the Subdistrict of Văñ Jin in Brè Province. It was presented in 1946 A.D. to the Division of Manuscripts and Inscriptions of the Department of Fine Arts by Brañ Garū Atularatanāñāna of Văt Păñ Snuk, the Cau Gañah of Văñ Jin, and is now kept in the Vajirañāna Hall of the old National Library building in Bangkok. A reading by Mr. Prasāra Puñpragōñ, with commentary by Prasert na Nagara, is published in **Prajum Śilācarik**, IV, page 133 f. For a photograph of the inscription, see *op. cit.*, facing page 134.

The text consists of 29 lines of writing. The first three lines, and part of the fourth, are in Pali; the remainder is in *Tai*. The Sukhodayan script is used throughout. The form of the letters is remarkably similar to that in Rāma Gāñhēñ's inscription; but the vowels have their normal position in relation to the consonants. The mai-hăñ-ākāśa does not occur, being replaced by reduplicating the final consonant of the syllable. The vowels ^ˆ and ^ˆ are represented by ^ˆ or ^ˆ. The mai-ek occurs only once, as a syllabic indicator, not as a tone marker; and the symbol for the mai-do is lacking.

The chief event commemorated in the inscription is dated in the year of the hare, a 'katt mau' year of the Tai cycle, on the fifteenth (?) day of the waxing moon of the seventh month, a 'mōñ plau' day in the Tai cycle. The designation of the year is clear and easily legible. The year of the hare, 'katt mau' in the Tai cycle, could mean either C.S. 701 (1339 A.D.), or any year separated from C.S. 701 by a multiple of 60 years. Obviously C.S. 641 (1279 A.D.) will not do, because the Tai script did not come into existence until 1283 A.D. (see *JSS* 59/2, pp. 191, 196, 201-202 [IV/8-11], 217 [IV/8-11] and note 122). C.S. 761 (1399 A.D.) is very improbable because of the total absence of the mai-hăñ-ākāśa. We therefore take the year to be C.S. 701=1339 A.D., which the archaic appearance of the script serves to confirm.

The day of the month, 𑄀𑄁 . . ., is mutilated. As the lacuna is wide enough for just two letters, the obvious reconstruction is 𑄀𑄁, 'fifteen'; but in any case the complete number has to be something between ten and fifteen, as the waning moon begins the day after the fifteenth of the waxing. Not one of these dates in the seventh month of C.S. 701 (1339) would be a 'mōñ plau' day in the Tai cycle; but the discrepancy, rather than invalidating our view that the year was really C.S. 701 (1339), must be considered as an example of the disarray of the calendar in the Sukhodaya area before it was reformed by Mahādharmañāñā I between 1347 and 1357.

The inscription, if we are right in dating it to the year 1339 A.D., is the second oldest known epigraph in Sukhodayan script, being preceded only by that of Rāma Gāmhèn.

The text commemorates a group of benefactions made by Khun (name illegible), the ruler of Mōaṅ Tròk Salòp and Jè Ñun, which were presumably two mōaṅs in what is now the Province of Brè. But the ruler is not the author of the inscription: the latter is evidently a high-ranking monk, perhaps the person named Cau Bāy Salòp (line 26), who receives a gift of monastic robes from the ruler, and who seems to be the lord abbot of the monastery which is the chief recipient of the ruler's benefactions. The name of this monastery does not appear in the legible portions of the text.

The text itself has the form of a short sermon delivered by this monk. It begins with a passage of homage to the Three Gems in Pali, followed by one in *Tai*, and a general exhortation to persons of all ranks to follow the Buddha's religion and to perform acts of merit. The remainder is a eulogy of the ruler of Mōaṅ Tròk Salòp and Jè Ñun, beginning with persuading his subjects to fabricate 11,108 votive tablets of tin or clay. It continues with a list of his benefactions to the monastery: gifts of a relic (of the Buddha), images of the Buddha, utensils of silver and gold, then listing various articles connected with the ceremony of presentation, such as umbrellas and flags, musical instruments, parched rice, flowers, torches, candles, incense, sandalwood and fragrant oil. At the stated date, the ruler puts something illegible, doubtless the relic, into a basin, in which we should probably understand that it performs a miracle while he lustrates it. The purpose of the lustration seems to be to prepare the relic for enshrinement in a stucco-covered structure of laterite, presumably a cetiya, which the ruler has built in the monastery. His other benefactions include building a sālā, presenting slaves and animals to the monastery, and making other offerings to it.

๒๓. (ง) สาลาดวยแลจิงแตงหากรยาทา (น) ..
๒๔. คนครอกนิงใหญ่พระชาวต (ว)
๒๕. (ว) นิงมาตว) นิงววตวว) นิงควายตวว) นิง
๒๖. สำรบบเจ้าพายสลอบขีพร
๒๗. แปดแสนหกเห (ม) ห ...
๒๘. (ม) นนอนหาสืบ
๒๙. หมาก

Translation

[1-4.] Vandetamanujaṃ s mahantaṃ ratanattayaṃ pavakkhāmi mahā-dānaṃ suṇātha sādha¹ o//o

[4-8.] I raise² my hands³ to salute the Three Gems, which are more excellent than Indra and B[rahmā] all the people. [You who are of noble rank] (such as) Khun or Mun Nāy⁴, (as well as) the populace⁵, (should) all listen to the Lord Buddha's⁶ teaching about earning merit.

[8-13.] (We) shall speak about Khun, the ruler of Mōaṅ Tròk Salòp and Jè Ñun, who has diffused the love of earning merit and (observing the) Dharma. He is a kindly ruler who persuaded nobles, officials, mun nāy and the populace, as well as many princesses and princes, to stamp images of the Lord (Buddha) in tin or clay⁷, totaling eleven thousand one hundred and eight.

[13-21.] (He presented this monastery with) one holy relic, two two ivory images (of the Buddha), as well as silver trays for areca nuts and gold trays for areca nuts, umbrellas and flags, accompanied by the sound of xylophones and the sound of drums, (and other things, such as) bowls of parched rice, flowers, torches, candles, incense, sandalwood and fragrant oil. He bowed down to do homage with the five points⁸, making these offerings in homage to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. Then he put . . . in a basin . . . at an auspicious moment on a 'mōn plau' day, the fifteenth [?] day of the waxing moon of the seventh month, in the 'katt mau' year, a year of the hare.

[21-29.] From the time they started forming laterite (into blocks to build a cetiya ?) up to the time they covered it with stucco, it took one month. Then he also erected a sālā and prepared offerings to give as alms (to the monks). . . . (He gave) one family of slaves to look after the holy (cetiya ?), [one] elephant, [one horse,] one ox, and one buffalo. monastic robes for Cau Bāy Salòp eight hundred and sixty thousand (cowries ?) fifty pillows areca nuts

1. We have regularized the spelling of this Pali passage. If we were to romanize the spelling as given in the inscription, it would read as follows:

vandetamanujaññ s mahannaṭṭṭhrattanattata (yaṃ pava) kkkhāmi mahādanāññ sunātha (sādha) vo.

2. ဂျ (line 4) = ဂျဝ (ဂ္ဂ).

3. မ် (line 4).

4. Khun was a princely title. In the Ayudhyan system, the Mun Nāy were the administrators of the population in their assigned territories; it is rather surprising to find the title in use at Brè in the fourteenth century.

5. ไพร่ไทย (line 7) = ไพร่ไทย.

6. The reading is doubtful and our translation conjectural.

7. I.e. to make votive tablets.

8. I.e. with his forehead, both his hands, and both his knees on the ground.