THE THAI ‘KAṬA MAṆḌIARAPĀLA’
AND MALACCA
by
David K. Wyatt
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London

The Thai ‘Palatine Law’ (Kaṭa Maṇḍiarapāla or Kot Montianbān) invariably figures in any discussion of the early history of Malacca. Its ostensible date, Culaṣaṅkarāja 720 or A.D. 1358, has long puzzled scholars who rightly but uncertainly have felt it necessary to dismiss on external grounds its inclusion of Malacca and other peninsular states in its list of the tributaries of the Empire of Ayudhya. As a result, however, not only has the law been held as irrelevant to the study of the history of the Malay Peninsula in the fourteenth century, but it also has been neglected in considering the fifteenth century, primarily because of the difficulty in dating it. The recent chronological research of Phiphat Sukhathit makes possible a fresh examination of this law as a piece of historical evidence in its own right and allows a more plausible date to be assigned to it.

The ‘Palatine Law’ is a lengthy piece of legislation framed primarily to regulate the royal succession and the position and status of the royal family in old Thai society. Only two brief sections need concern us here: the preamble of the law (Clause 1), which bears upon its date; and its first substantive clause (Clause 2), the list of tributary states.

* The following abbreviations are employed:

Ratburi = Prince Ratburi Direkrit (ed), Kaṭahmaya (Law) 2nd ed, 2 vols, Bangkok 1901.

2) Phiphat Sukkhathit, ‘Śakarāja Cujāmaṇṭ,’ Silpākara Jan 1963 vol 6 no 5 pp. 47-57; and ‘Kāra nap pi hēn buddhasākaraṇa (Counting the Years of the Buddhist Era),’ Silpākara May 1963 vol 7 no 1 pp. 48-58.
TEXT

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3) Following KTSD vol 1 pp. 69-70.
4) ราชสมบัติ in Bradley vol 2 p. 91; and Ratburi vol 2 p. 53.
5) เซียงไทย loc. cit.
6) เซียงวรรณ loc. cit.
7) เวชวิทยา in Ratburi vol 2 p. 54; and เวชวิทยา in Bradley vol 2 p. 91.
8) ผลการ in Bradley vol 2 p. 92.
9) พระพุทธ in Ratburi vol 2 p. 54.
10) พิษศึก in Bradley vol 2 p. 92.
11) สารานาตา loc. cit. and Ratburi vol 2 p. 54.
12) ศูนย์ไท loc. cit.
TRANSLATION

Clause 1

Auspicious moment, 720 of the era; on Saturday, the sixth day of the waxing moon of the fifth month in the year of the Rat, King Rāmādhipati Paramatrailokanāratha...

Clause 2

Altogether, twenty towns (mōhā) send the gold and silver flowers to the King: Nagara Hluan, Śrī Sātanāgaṇāhuta, Chiangmai, Tōn śl, Chiangkrai, Chiangkran, Chiangsaen, Chiangrung, Chiangrai, Hsenwi, Khemarāja, Phrae, Nan, Taidōn, Goṭrapōn and Reo Kaeo, these sixteen in the north; and, in the south, Ujong Tanah, Malacca, Malayū and Varavāri, four towns; together twenty towns which send the gold and silver flowers.

There are eight rulers of great cities (mahānagara) who bear only the water of allegiance: Phitsanulok, Sajanālai, Sukhothai, Kamphaengphet, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Nakhon Rajasima, Tenassserim and Tavoy.

The Date of the Law

Four elements in the law's preamble have a bearing upon its date: (1) the year, 720, of an unspecified era; (2) the cyclical Year of the Rat; (3) the day on which the law was promulgated, expressed in terms of the lunar calendar; and (4) the name of the king who ordered its promulgation, Rāmādhipati Paramatrailokanāratha. The name of the king alone would appear to point to the reign of King Trailok (A.D. 1448-1488); but there is one section of the 'Law on Rebellion' which includes his name in terms almost identical to those of this law, and which dates unmistakably from the year A.D. 1434. While this is the only such case, it is sufficiently an exception to urge the advisability of relying primarily upon other elements of the law in determining its date.

13) Bhumipol loc. cit.
14) KTSO vol 4 p. 132 (Brahā aiyakāra kraṭhata sūk, Clause 15).
There were four distinct dating systems employed in the laws of the Ayudhya period: (1) Culaśākarāja, the Lesser Era (+638 = A.D.); (2) Mahāśākarāja, the Greater Era (+78 = A.D.); (3) Buddhāśākarāja, the Buddhist Era (+543 = A.D.)\(^{15}\) and (4) Čulāmanṭisākarāja, Čulāmaṇḍī Era, or, as Prince Damrong termed it, Śākarāja Kaṭahmāya, Legal Era (+188 = A.D.)\(^{16}\). Faced with a law or inscription of the Ayudhya period bearing a date between 712 and 1129, one’s most ready inclination is to assume that the date is expressed in the Lesser Era. With the ‘Palatine Law’, this temptation is nearly irresistible, as conversion yields a date of A.D. 1358, eight years after the founding of a new dynasty at Ayudhya and at a time when one would expect such a law as this to be framed. The 1358 date, however, cannot be correct, as 1358 was the Year of the Dog and not the Year of the Rat.\(^{17}\) One may take it as a cardinal rule that, however much scribes and copyists may confuse dates, the animal cyclical years are almost never incorrect. As the law’s date yields no tenable dates by conversion from any of the other eras,\(^{18}\) one is forced to assume either that the figure given was miscopied, or that it was incorrectly converted from another era to 720 of the Lesser Era.

Prince Damrong, in his study of the Thai laws, took the first alternative and suggested that the date should read 820, i.e., A.D. 1458;\(^{19}\) but 820 was the Year of the Tiger.

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\(^{15}\) Until early in the seventeenth century, Buddhist Era was expressed in Thailand in the Sinhalese manner, in terms of current rather than expired years. Phaphat, ‘Kāra nāp pī’...op. cit. p. 48.

\(^{16}\) See Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (ed), พระรัฐจุลราชการ ตั้งแต่ ช่างปัย พระรัฐจุลราชการทั้งหมด (Royal Chronicles, Royal Autograph Edition) vol 1 p. 641 Bangkok 1962; and, especially, Phaphat, ‘Śākarāja cuḷāmaṇṭi,’ op. cit.

\(^{17}\) Established by means of the Luang Prasoet version of the Royal Chronicles of Ayudhya (an English translation of which, by O. Frankfurter, appears in Journal of the Siam Society 1909 vol 6 pt 3 pp. 1-21) and the inscriptions, Coedès, G., Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam vol 1 and Thailand, Office of the Prime Minister, Commission for the Publication of Historical, Cultural, and Archeological Records (comps.), Prakjumśīḷa cārik, bhāg 3 (Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, III) Bangkok 2508/1965.

\(^{18}\) Read with an assumed thousand digit as Mahāśākarāja 1720, it becomes A.D. 1798, Year of the Horse; as Buddhist Era 1720 it becomes A.D. 1177; and as Čulāmaṇṭi Era 1720 it becomes A.D. 1908.

\(^{19}\) Royal Autograph Edition vol 1 p. 643.
digit is suspected, the likelihood is that the animal year and final digit are correct, the latter because it must coincide with the correct cyclical year of the decade (in this case, the tenth year). The 'Palatine Law', then, on this test, probably was framed in 710, 770, 830... of the Lesser Era, all of which were years of the Rat. Of these, only 830 (A.D. 1468) falls within the reign of King Trailok.

Similarly, in the event of incorrect conversion from one era to another, the year A.D. 1468 also is indicated. First, the 'Palatine Law' bears by far the lowest-numbered date of almost fifty pre-eighteenth century Thai laws. The next nearest is 796, the law already mentioned of A.D. 1434; while the next after it are two laws of 955 (B.E. 1955?), each mentioning a different year of the animal cycle, neither of which corresponds to the correct animal year. The possibility of an incorrect conversion is further strengthened by the fact that the only other laws known definitely to date from the reign of King Trailok are both dated 1298 in an unspecified era. If the 'Palatine Law' dated from the reign of King Trailok, one would expect it to bear a date of ca. 1300 in the same era. Of six possible misconversions, only one is reasonable: that a scribe, assuming a date of 1280 to be expressed in Mahāśākaraśa, converted it to Culaśākaraśa by subtracting 560 to obtain C.S. 720; when the date actually was expressed in Culaśānīśākaraśa, and he should have subtracted 450 to obtain a date of C.S. 830, A.D. 1468. The likelihood that this indeed occurred is increased by the fact that the Cuḷāmaṇi Era was imperfectly known in the nineteenth century when the present collection of old Thai laws was compiled, and only recently has been identified and conclusively dated.

20) KTSOl vol I p. 197 (Bramaśākta); and IV, 155 (Kraṃpata stūk, Clause 68).

21) KTSOl vol I p. 219 (Brah aiyakāra ṭāmhnē na balarśan, Clause 1), and 316 (Brah aiyakāra ṭāmhnē nādahār hua mōna, Clause 30).

22) The two permutations of Buddhist Era yield Lesser Era 1341 (by Greater Era rules) or 1451 (by Legal Era rules); the two permutations of Legal Era yield Lesser Era-11 (by Buddhist Era rules) or 610 (by Greater Era rules); and the other Greater Era permutation yields Lesser Era 99 by Buddhist Era rules.

23) Phiphat, 'Śākaraśa Cuḷāmaṇi' op. cit.
Both possibilities, then—the possibility of misread digits and the possibility of misconversion from one era to another—suggest the same year, C.S. 830 or A.D. 1468/69, as the date of the ‘Palatine Law’.

An empirical check on the accuracy of this date is possible through reference to the weekday, Saturday, on which the law is said to have been promulgated. The Burmese, Lao, and Cambodian chronological systems all prescribe Tuesday for the sixth day of the waxing moon of the fifth month in the year in question, a discrepancy of three days; but they also miss by three days the correct weekday of the Vāt Cūḷāmaṇi inscription of 1465.24 If the date of the 1465 inscription is used as a basis for calculation of the weekday of the sixth of the waxing moon of the fifth month three years later, the result is the expected Saturday. Thus the empirical consistency between the inscription and the law lends certainty to a date of mid-April, A.D. 1468, for the ‘Palatine Law’.25

The Tributary States

Of the twenty tributary states mentioned in Clause 2, most are readily identifiable, and the list as a whole fits much more readily into the context of sixteenth century Southeast Asian history than into either the preceding or succeeding centuries. The sixteen northern tributaries were a product of the wars begun in the reign of King Paramarājā I (1370-1388) which continued through much of the sixteenth century. By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, almost all of them had fallen to the Burmese. Chiengmai, Chiengsaen, Chiengrai, Phrae, and Nan are present-day provincial centers in North Thailand, while Hsenwi in the Burmese Shan States and Chiangrong (Keng Hung) in Yunnan are readily identifiable. The remainder require some explanation:


25) The only available tables for conversion to the Julian calendar are those for the Hindu and Chinese calendars, neither of which fit the Indochinese cases.
Nagara Hluan: This term is used in the chronicles in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to refer to Angkor, the date of the first capture of which has now been firmly established as 1369 by O.W. Holters. Its inclusion among the northern tributaries is no more unusual than the inclusion of some eastern provinces among those administered by the Department of the North (Kram Mahātdai) in the latter portion of the Ayudhya and in the Bangkok period.

Śrī Sūtanāgaṇahuta: Luang Prabang, capital of the Lao kingdom of Lan Xang until 1560.

Tōn Û: Either Toungoo in Burma, or, possibly, Tang Au, an old town on the Mekong River about twenty-five miles north of Chiengsaen.

Jiaŋkrai and Jiaŋkrān: Two paired towns, mentioned in the Luang Prasoet version of the Royal Chronicles under the date Culasakarāja 900 (1538). Wood reads the two as a single town, Gyaing, in the Moulmein district of Burma, which was tributary to Siam in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Khemarāja: The name used in the old Pali-Thai chronicles for Chiangtung, or Keng Tung, in the Burmese Shan States.

Taidōn:?


Rev Kev: Possibly a town in the region of Ubon?

26) Holters, O.W., ‘The Khmer King at Basan (1371-3) and the Restoration of the Cambodian Chronology During the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,’ Asia Major new series, vol 12 pt 1, 1966 pp. 44-89.


As for the four southern vassals, only Malacca's identification is both clear and reasonable, the chronicles recording a Thai attack on Malacca and the lower peninsula in Culasĩkarāja 817 (A.D. 1455/56). In the course of this expedition the enlistment of tributaries might be expected, but there is no indication of whom they may have been, outside this reference in the 1468 'Palatine Law': Ujong Tanah, Malāyū, and Varavārī. Johore seems indicated by the first. Gerini long ago suggested Muar for Varavārī and 'the district on and about the Malāyū river, immediately adjoining Johor on the West' for Malāyū; and Coedes has been able to carry their identifications no further. At least the establishing of the later date of 1468 for the 'Palatine Law' removes the conflict of claims between it and the Nāgarakritagama. It would be hoped that the resolution of this conflict of evidence might lead to a closer examination of what may now be viewed as two equally valid claims of peninsular territory separated by a century.


33) Coedes, Les États ... op. cit. pp. 266-67 & 439.