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 Coedes 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 Coedes' opinion these titles cannot refer to the king ruling at Ayutthaya because at that time the ruler was Paramatra ilokanātha, and in any case, according to Coedes, 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 Coedes, 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 archaeological 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 Coedes in Prachum Tharok 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 Kāmaphī Bējra, Ayudhya and Biṣṇuloka.

2) ibid., p. 207. Concerning the name "Paramatra ilokanātha", as this king is referred to by Coedes, the reader should be aware that the earliest document in which this title is found is the Vat Cullāmanī inscription in which it appears as Paramatra ilokanātha. The Ikād Prasat's Chronicle refers to this king as samatī brah parama traloka cau or samatī brah traloka cau. In what follows I shall adopt Coedes' usage of "Paramatra ilokanātha" 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. In his interpretation the inscriptions show that one of the captive princes was established with his exiled court as an Ayutthayan vassal at Tenasserim.

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 Saka (937 and 1167 A.D.).

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. 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’êtant de civilisation ou tout au moins de langue cambodgienne, ne relevait pas, au point de vue politique, du royaume khmer”.

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.
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.  

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.

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. 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"., it is certainly a document emanating from the court of Ayutthaya and includes the full titles of the reigning king, Bedrâja.

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.

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

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


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, although at least three different styles of writing may be discerned. 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.

Coedes 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 Coedes speaks of the title “Sri Dharmaraja” being particular to the princes reigning at Ligor (Nakhon Sithammarat) and being absent from documents relating to the kings of Srivijaya who favored the title “Maharaja”. The latter title was also frequently used at Chiangmai but apparently never at Ayutthaya, and the kings of Sukhothai seem to have favored the title “Mahàdharmaràja”. The importance of patterns in royal titles has also been emphasized by de Casparis in his discussion of the Grahi Buddha.

15) Sila Çitra’s Naganara 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.
19) For examples see inscriptions nos. 68, 71, 72, 73, in Prachum sila Chara’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 Culamaq, in Phitsanulok, in Thai, and erected by an undoubtedly Ayutthayan ruler, King Naray, 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 Culamaq, 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.

22) Prachum Phangnamwadaw (Collected Chronicles) Part I, National Library Edition, pp. 139-143; and Prachum Thatnabhat suanai 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 ‘Kata Malapiarapala’ and Malacca”, JSS LV(2), July 1967, pp. 279-286, implied that the inscription, or part of it, was erected by King Paramatrailokanatha 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 charuk phat 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 Paramatrailokanatha, 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 brah pāda stac brah rājaonkāra parmmarājādhirāja
II vrah pāda saṃtac vrah rājaonkāra parmmarājādhirāja
III saṃtac brah
IV brah śri sarrbejīna saṃtec brah
V pah śri sarrbej stec pah
VI brah

I rāmādhipati parama cakrabarti
II
III rāmādhipati śrīsrindra parama cakrabarti
IV rāmādhipati śrīsrindra parama mahācakrabartiśvara
V rāmādhipati śrīsrindra paramo mahācakrabartisaravara
VI rāmādhipati śrīsrindra parama cākrobarti

I rāja
II
III rājādhīrāja rāmesvara dharmarāja tejo jayabarma
IV rājādhīrāja meṣvara dharmikarāja tejo jaiyaparma
V rājādhīrāja rāmesvara dharmiggharāja tejo jaiyabarrphma
VI rājādhīrāja rāmesvara dharmmikarāja tejo jaiyabarrma

I
II ta paramma pavitra
III debātideba tribhūvanādhipesa paramo pabitra
IV debātideba tribhūvanādhipesa lokajēṣṭha, etc.
V debātideba tribhūvanādhipesa lokajēṣṭha, etc.
VI debātideba tribhūvanādhipesa paramo 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 Culaṁañi, Phatthalung and Phichit. In fact, with the exception of brah śri sarrbejña, 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 “Paramatrailokanātha”, 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 Paramatrailokanātha” should not surprise us when we realize that

²⁴) Thai historiography has retrospectively given the title “Śri Sarbejña I” to the king known in the chronicles as Mahādhammarāja, 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 rājpūṇi dated 1839 (A.D. 1355) in which the titles are those of Tenasserim plus brah buddha cau yān 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 cula, loka and Buddhist eras.

²⁶) H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rachanubhab, Athihai phra nam phra cau phaen din (Explanation of Kings’ Names), pp. 6-7.
the titles from Vat Culāmaṇi 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 “Nārāya” and “Bedrāja”.

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 Dharmarāja, in conflict with his brother and nephew, asked for Siamese help and the rebellious princes were taken away to captivity in Siam. From this Coedes, 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 trade.

27) See the titles of Nārāya and Bedrāja 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 Khat, 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 Phongsawadan 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 Coedes, “Essai de classification des documents historiques Cambodiens, etc.”, BEFEO 1849, pp. 15-28, and the Thai version in Prachum Phongsawadan 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 Nupparat Chronicle places this event in 1473 rather than 1476, the date found in the Nong Chronicle. In fact, the Nupparat versions in both Phnom Penh and Bangkok have saka 1398 = A.D. 1476. See Institut Bouddhique, Phnom Penh, mss. no. 1364 and National Library, Bangkok, Phongsawadan Khamen 45/3, p. 111.
trade crossing the peninsula to the east coast and then on to Ayutthaya. 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. 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:


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 Coedes’ article appeared.

At the time Coedes wrote apparently only one other inscription of this type was known—a very brief text on a gold plate found at Vat Rajapura.\(^{32}\) 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. Coedes, 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 Dharmaraja, 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 obhj jayadbhip iti sri ramaratadu jaya abhaibhiyaparakramabhadha. See the Lingat edition of the old Thai laws, Pramuan buhman rachakon thi l, 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) Coedes, “Tenasserim”, p. 205. “Rajapura”6, like “Paramatrailokanatha”, 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 Hitav Prayorāth chronicle, sub anna 786, where it is called “Vat Rajapura”:
title was conferred by the king. 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 (*suvānapata*), presumably with the title inscribed on it.  

Since Coedes 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. In chronological order they are:

- gold plate from *brah parama dhātu*, Phichit, dated 1959 (A.D. 1415)
- gold plate from *brah 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 śri sarrbejña*, 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*.  

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33) ibid.
35) Prachum Thai Mathet Sanai 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 *nī* in the inscription from Suphanburi. The expressions *nī* pandavil/pandit 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 *tau* (*tāo*) following *anuvadana* and *ka* (*kā* following *pratisiddhi*). *Tidt*, 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, *brah/wrah* and *sāma*, 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 Rājāpūraṇa 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 1487
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 brah/vraḥ baras/vara prasiddhi, which Coedes rendered, “conférant”, “daignant conferer”, 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 sraddha anumodana, “avec un coeur rempli de vertu, de foi et de satisfaction”, according to Coedes’ translation of no. X,40 after which there is the term buddhāṭikā, meaning

40) Ibid.
| I. | Subhamāstī | 1410 | Saka | Mani | Nīkṣṭra | Pāncamī | Ket | Śravaṇa | Čindavāra | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pāndil | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Sāntac | 872 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| II. | Subhamāstī | 1384 | Śūkla | Muniya | Nākṣatra | Dāśamī | Ket | Pāla | Śrīva | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Sāntac | 872 |
| III. | Subhamāstī | 1385 | Saka | Mānā | Nākṣatra | Nīkṣṭra | Saṭṭhi | Ket | Pusya | Śrīva | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Sāntac | 872 |
| IV. | Subhamāstī | 1384 | Saka | Rākṣa | Nākṣatra | Nīkṣṭra | Saṭṭhi | Ket | Pusya | Śrīva | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Sāntac | 872 |
| V. | Subhamāstī | 1384 | Saka | Khaṭi | Nākṣatra | Nīkṣṭra | Saṭṭhi | Ket | Pusya | Śrīva | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Sāntac | 872 |
| VI. | Subhamāstī | 1385 | Saka | Māne | Nīkṣṭra | Pīy | Ket | Vaiśākhyā | Budhavāra | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Brah | Sāntac | 872 |
| VII. | Subhamāstī | 1385 | Saka | Tūḥ | Nīkṣṭra | Pīy | Ket | Vaiśākhyā | Budhavāra | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Brah | Sāntac | 872 |
| IX. | Subhamāstī | 1387 | Saka | Chālī | Nīkṣṭra | Pīy | Ket | Vaiśākhyā | Budhavāra | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Brah | Sāntac | 872 |
| X. | Subhamāstī | 1388 | Saka | Ca | Nākṣatra | Śrīva | Nīkṣṭra | Nīkṣṭra | Asādha | Čindavāra | Subhamahuttī | Mān | Pañḍval | Braḥ | Rājaokāra | Brah | Sāntac | 872 |

**Chronological Details**

- There was a royal order to confer

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**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) Mami, year of the horse, is incorrect. 1410 was a monkey year. The editor of the collection was also in error in reading the mami of the original transcription as māṇi, goat year.

38) Coedes omitted saka 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 buddhāṭākā, 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 buddhāṭākā. 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 buddhāṭākā 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 ...”.

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 braḥ rāmeśvara” and “nu braḥ saṅgha ... phōn nu ba khun āri śrī śrisudassana”. 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 buddhāṭākā

41) See note 34 above.
of a monk of comparable rank was subordinated to the king's approval in the usual manner.\textsuperscript{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:

\begin{quote}
(1) s'ubham astu 1388 s'aka ca nakṣatra asādha dvādasī roc candahāra acca - (2) - - subhhamahūrtti mān buddhat [i] kā saṃtac braḥ guru rāmāḍhi (3) pati s'rīs' rīndraparamacakrabartti rājopadhyāya saṅgharāja saṅgha (4) pariṇāyaka tilakaratna mahāsvāmi s'rīparakramabāhu nu braḥ saṅgha (5) - - - phoṅ nu ba khun s'rīs' rāsudassanarājādhirāja mān sucarica surddhā (6) anumodanā lḥvāy braḥ bara pras'iddhi braḥ mahāthera sudassa [na] debā (7) cāryya nāmakara oy
\end{quote}

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) Rāmāḍhipati S'rīs'rīndraparamacakrabartirāja, Saṅgharāja Saṅghaparināyaka Tilakaratnamahāsvāmi S'rī Parakramabāhu, avec tous les membres du Saṅgha et Ba Khun S'rīs'rī Sudassana Rājādhirāja, avec un cœur 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 guru, "holy or royal teacher". Of course saṃtac is appropriate for a high ranking monk, but it should also be used before

\textsuperscript{42} The titles of the two monks are as follows:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
Inscription VII: & stec braḥ guru cuḍāmaṇī \\
Inscription X: & saṃtac braḥ guru (rāmāḍhipati, etc.) \\
VII: & s'rī saṅgharāja näya ka tilakaratna \\
& rājopadhyāya saṅgharāja saṅghaparināyaka tilakaratna \\
VII: & mahāsvāmi paraṇa rājācāry \\
X: & mahāsvāmi s'rī parakramabāhu \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
the king's title. A second point to consider is the title rājopadhyāya, which Coedes, taking it as a tatpurūṣa compound, translated as "maitre spirituel du (roi)". However, Khmer syntax requires that rājopadhyāya in this sense precede the king's title rāmadhipati, etc. For Coedes' translation to be correct then, the inscription should read, "... saṃtac brah gurā rājopadhyāya [saṃtac brah] rāmadhipati, etc...".

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 rājaṛṣi, "a sage who is king" or "rishi of royal descent"44, with the Thai term rājupathambh ( roi ), "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 Coedes' italics have been omitted.

IC vol. III, pp. 180-192, "Stèle de Trapail Don On", p. 184, "... ye h ta jāvah kaṃ kaviṣvara bhūta vala ṇiṣṭaṃpada...". Translation, p. 189, "... nous ayant nom kaṃ kaviṣvara, bhūta vala ṇiṣṭaṃpada..."

IC vol. VI, pp. 154-164, "Inscriptions de Prasat Nāk Buon", p. 162, "... mraññ ciṛ ṛjaṇḍrasāhīha ta rāppā ste śvrañ tattan...". Translation, "... mraññ... pōre de Steś Vrañ Tattan...


ibid., p. 88, "... ste śv an Vāmaśīva cau ste śv an ěśāvalaye...". Translation, "... ste śv an Vāmaśīva, pete-nçen (cau) du ste śv an..."

ibid., "... ste śv an Vāmaśīva ja ěśīya ste śv an ěśāvalaye ta jā guru vrañ pāda Iṣ-varalośa". Translation, pp. 112, "Le ste śv an Vāmaśīva était ñše de ste śv an ěśāvalaye, qui était guru de S.M. Iṣ-varalośa". 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, vrañ pāda, "His Majesty", were included between "guru" and the king's names.


Thus due to the absence of *sautac brah before rāmādhipati* and the position of *rañopadhya* it seems that the whole series of titles beginning with *sautac* and ending with *śrīparakramabāhu* must refer to the same person, that is “His Majesty (*sautac*) the royal teacher (*brah guru*) rāmādhipati... the royal upadhyāya, saṅgharāja, leader of the saṅgha (*saṅghaparināyaka)*”, and the translation should be, “There was a statement by *sautac brah guru rāmādhipati śrīśrindra paremecakrabartti* the royal upadhyāya, etc”. The titles *parināyaka*, *tilakaratnamahasvami* 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 sardāda anumodanā*, which in the other inscriptions indicates approval of the buddhaśikā just before the expression meaning “confer”. However, in this case *anumodanā* has no function, since the buddhaśikā 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 Culāmanī 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 *Kalpāna*, 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)” Upendraṇāhamapati-vartman who became a monk with the titles upadhyāya śrī rājabhikṣu or upadhyāya kamrateś aśri 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 Paramatrailokanatha as a monk, we can find some support for it in the Hīvadh Prasrotth Chronicle and the inscription of Vat Cullāmāṇi.

According to the chronicle King Paramatrailokanatha became a monk at Vat Cullāmāṇi 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 Cullāmāṇi 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 (ānuśasana) 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 Ayuthyan table of ranks (ānuśasana) which shows several saṅgharājas in the later Ayuthyan 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 hīvadh... saṅgharāja cau vat ooy...”), II. 14-15, inscription no. 99, Prachum sila āharūk, Part IV, pp. 82-85).

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King Paramatralokanātha 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 Culāmaṇji inscription give to this event is only one year earlier than the date saka 1388 (A.D. 1466) of the Tenasserim inscription. If indeed the latter emanates from King Paramatralokanātha 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 Paramatralokanātha 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 Culāmaṇji 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 Hīvān Prasrotī’th chronology is accurate this king must have been Paramatralokanātha. 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 Prāñhun Phongswudan (Collected Chronicles), Part I.
that it was issued by the same king during the time he was in monkhood at Vat Culaṃañi. 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, Vat Rājapīṇa, Vat Braḥ Śrī Sarībejña 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 Coedes briefly noted, 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 jayavarmmadeva. The first is found in the titles of two of the last recorded kings of Angkor, śrī śrīndravarmmadeva (1295/6-1307) and śrī śrīndra jayavarma (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. Certain other main elements of the Tenasserim titles such as rāmādhīpati, cakrabartti,

51) Tenasserim, p. 208.
52) Varmana 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 Rēcōjīt Indonēsia in BEFEO 48(2), 1957, “Bibliographie”, p. 608, n. 2.

In Khmer-language texts this title always appears as varna/varamma or barna/ 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 Coedes’ index to the inscriptions, IC vol. VIII.
and rājadhīrāja, 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. 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 "Kalyāṇimsa Inscriptions", Epigraphia Birmanica, vol. III, part II, pp. 236, 238, 265, where the king known to posterity as "Dhammaceti" is entitled Kāmādhīpatismahārāja and Kāmādhīpatis parama mahādharmarājadhīrāja.