DIFFICULTIES WITH INSCRIPTION NO. 1

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Inscription no. 1, known as the inscription of King Râm Khamhâng (text edition and translation i.a. in: Coëdes 1924 Recueil; Griswold / Prasöt 1971 Inscr. Râm Khamhâng), generally is held to have been written by King Râm Khamhâng of Sukhôthai in 1292 (with the exception of one [Coëdes] or two [Griswold / Prasöt] postscripts on face 4); to be the oldest specimen of Thai writing the letters of which, according to the inscription, had been invented by the king in 1283; to give an adequate description of Sukhôthai at the time; and therefore to be a trustworthy source for conclusions in the fields of history, art history, religion and linguistics.

As for the stone on which the inscription is written, a short, black, square pillar with a pyramidal top, inscribed on all its four faces, it seems generally accepted that Prince Mongkut, the future King Mongkut, in 1833 saw the stone in Sukhôthai and had it brought to Bangkok, together with a stone slab which is now known as the stone throne Phra Thâm Manangkha Silâ (Ram Khamhang, Manang Silâ Bât as it is called in the inscription), and another stone inscription with Khmer letters which is now known as the inscription of Wat Pâ Mamuang or inscription no. 4. Certain ruins to the west of Sukhôthai, outside the town, have been identified as the former Wat Pâ Mamuang. But Prince Mongkut is said to have found all three items together on the Palace Hill of Sukhôthai, called Nôn Prasât. At the time, Prince Mongkut was a monk, making a journey through some of the old towns of northern central Thailand.

Inscription no. 1 has at times less than enchanted its readers. Prince Narit, in a letter to Prince Damrong dated 4 August 1939, wrote that inscriptions were rather perplexing; for example, the Râm Khamhâng inscription was a mixture of Râm Khamhâng's own words and those of others, and if everything was as well in Sukhôthai as the inscription says, then what was the use of saying it? (หนาเฉลิม, พระเจ้าประจุบมาพร้อมกับการปริญญาศึกษาว่า เขาตกลงอย่างต่ำค่อนข้างกับการแปลว่า แต่ถ้าทุกอย่างเป็นอย่างที่ได้กล่าวในข้อความนี้และวันที่ไหนที่มันเกิดขึ้น) (Prince Mongkut Biography 1971 Guide 29-31 and Michael Vickery (1978 Guide 205-209) were the first, as far as I know, to publish their difficulties with the inscription and its date of 1292, and to advance arguments for a lesser age, suggesting that the inscription was written in the time of Phayâ Lû Thai (c. 1347-1374). I myself have tried to show that King Râm Khamhâng did not actually invent the Thai alphabet but modernized an already existing Thai alphabet which apparently had been based on Mon letters (Penth 1985 Wat Kân Thom Inscriptions; 1985/1988 Jûrik Wat Kân Thôm; 1986 New Evidence; 1986 Thai Scripts). In 1986, Phiriya Krairiksh concluded that, for art historical and other reasons, the inscription must have been written after 1400 (Phariya 1986 Silapa dân neramit). In 1987, Vickery, chiefly using linguistic evidence, again concluded against a great age for the inscription and even questioned its authenticity (Vickery 1987 Inscr. Râm Khamhâng). Finally, in August 1988, during a lecture at the Siam Society, Phiriya Krairiksh compared certain expressions and passages in the inscription with other Sukhôthai inscriptions and also with some Thai classics, and concluded that the inscription must have been written between 1833-1855.

Even if one disagrees with some of the arguments advanced against the traditional interpretation and understanding of inscription no. 1, the fact remains that at present scholars from various fields are not satisfied. The combined weight of their critical arguments should be reason enough to prudently review the position of the inscription as an authoritative source and to try to solve the problems it poses.

Many difficulties and uncertainties in connection with the inscription have not been publicised. For instance, the sources that deal with the discovery of the inscription in Sukhôthai and its subsequent deciphering in Bangkok need some clarification. The earliest sources seem to be two works by the Supreme Patriarch, Prince Pawaret, a contemporary of King Mongkut. In his biography of the king, the Prince Patriarch refers only to the discovery of the stone throne and inscription no. 4, but not to the discovery of inscription no. 1 (Pawaret 1962 King Mongkut Biography 11-12; Pawaret 1968 King Mongkut Biography 50-51). It is reported that an unpublished notebook of the Prince Patriarch contains the same story, again omitting the discovery of inscription no. 1; but that elsewhere in the same notebook reference is made to some of the
contents of inscription no. 1 and to its Sukhothai origin (Krom Silapâkôn 1983 Jârûk samai Sukhothai 4-5). On the other hand, the biography of King Mongkut written by his son, the Prince Patriarch Wachirayân, says that Prince Mongkut found the stone throne, inscription no. 4 and inscription no. 1 in Sukhothai (Bradley 1909 Oldest Siamese Writing; Coedes 1924 Recueil "Thai part" 51). A good publication of all original sources would help to dissipate doubts about the history of the stone and its inscription.

In this article, I shall deal with three particular difficulties: (1) The date and objective of the inscription; (2) the "Mongol passage" in the inscription which has been interpreted as showing Mongol influence on Sukhothai; (3) the Jindâmanî evidence which is sometimes used in discussions to back up the date 1292 for the inscription.

**Date and Objective**

Inscription no. 1 is undated in the sense that it does not state the year in which it was written. But it mentions three different years which are expressed in the Mahâsakkarâja era (M.S. + 78 = A.D.) plus three more years which are expressed by stating that such and such an event happened a certain number of years (khao วัน) before or after an already mentioned M.S. year. The inscription thus contains a total of six dates: three by direct indication of the year, and three by reference. In theory, the inscription could have been written at any time after the most recent date. The six dates are, in the order in which they appear in the inscription:

14 years before M.S. 1214 = A.D. 1278

Planting of sugar-palm trees. This is the usual translation of the text. Another possible translation, dating the event to 1292, will be discussed at the end of the chapter. (Face 4, lines 10-12).

M.S. 1214 = A.D. 1292

Installation of the stone throne Manang Silâ Bât among the sugar-palm trees. For a different translation, dating the event to 1305-06, see at the end of the chapter. (Face 4, lines 12-13).

M.S. 1207 year Kun = A.D. 1285 or 1287

Excavation of relics and their reenshrinement in Mông Si Sachanâlai. The date is not certain because the figures and the name of the year are incompatible: M.S. 1207, year Kun "Pig." In fact, M.S. 1207 = A.D. 1285 was a year Rakâ "Cock," and the year Kun would be M.S. 1209 = A.D. 1287 (or earlier / later by x number of 12 years because there is a year Kun every 12 years). In the absence of corroboration, either may be correct, the numeral or the name of the year. (Face 4, lines 4-6).

After 6 years = A.D. 1290-91 or 1292-93

Completion of a stûpa built over the reenshrined relics. The dates calculated by reference are approximate because in the old way of counting years, any date beyond the local "New Year" could be counted as "one year later." (Face 4, lines 6-7).

After 3 years = A.D. 1292-94 or 1294-96

Completion of an enclosure wall around the Phra Mahâ Thât, probably the stûpa mentioned under 1290/1293. (Face 4, lines 7-8).

M.S. 1205 = A.D. 1283

"Invention" of Thai letters. (Face 4, lines 8-11).

Therefore, without additional evidence, the inscription could date at the earliest from 1292 or 1305-06, and could as well be more recent.

George Coedès is usually credited with having definitively shown that the inscription was written in 1292 with the aim to commemorate or to record the installation of the stone throne Manang Sîlâ Bât. However, Coedès was not so definite. Many of his readers overlooked the hesitation and prudence with which he expressed himself and interpreted and overinterpreted him in their own ways. As it is, even Coedès' own cautious reasoning needs reconsideration.

Coedès, with reservations, deduced the year of the writing of the inscription from the purpose or the objective of the inscription, and for Coedès the objective of the inscription was, again with reservations, King Râm Khamhâng's wish to record the installation of his stone throne in 1292.

As for the objective of the inscription, Coedès hesitated between being certain that the main point of the inscription was the installation of the stone throne, and thinking it probable that this might be so. Within two pages of his main work on the inscription, he offers two different opinions: "... la stèle avait justement pour objet de commémorer l'installation de ce trône..." On the next page, he says: "Il est à peu près hors de doute ... qu'elle avait pour objet de commémorer l'installation ... du trône de pierre" (Coedès 1924 Recueil 37-38).

His readers, however, had no doubts: "The purpose of the text is to commemorate the installation of the stone throne in the Sugar-Palm Grove in the gardens of the Royal Palace at Sukhodaya" (Griswold 1968 Historian's Debt 66). Some years later, Griswold / Prasöt wrote (1971 Inscr. Ram Khamhâng 191) : "Coedès was the first Western scholar to bring out clearly the formal purpose of the inscription;" and then they quote a passage from Coedès 1918 Notes critiques 21 which only says prudently: "Il est à peu près certain qu'elle (the inscription; HP) a pour objet de commémorer l'inauguration du trône de pierre..."

Concerning the date of the inscription, a glance through Coedès' writings shows that throughout his life he hesitated between the certainty and the probability that the inscription was composed in 1292: "... m.s. 1214 (1292 A.D.), date probable de l'inscription..." (Coedès 1919 Documents 32); "... la stèle de Râma K'amhêng composée en 1292" (Coedès 1964 Etats 357). But a few pages later in the same book, he writes: "En 1292, date probable de la stèle..." (p. 372).
There is a strange item that I am at a loss to explain. In his main work on the inscription (Coedes 1924 Recueil), Coedes does not date the inscription at all but merely says that the stone throne probably was inaugurated in 1292 (p.38). What is more, in his book on the history of Southeast Asia (Coedes 1964 Etats), which contains the already quoted passage, "la stèle de Râm Khamhông, composée en 1292" (p.357), that passage has a footnote, no. 2, which refers the reader to p. 37 of his main work on the inscription (viz. Coedes 1924 Recueil), but as has just been noted, he nowhere says there that the inscription was written in 1292!

But others took the date 1292 as definite: "The stone inscription, which bears the date of 1214 of the old Saka era... equivalent to 1292 A.D. . . ." (de May 1986 Asian Arcady 13). "His celebrated inscription of 1292 . . ." (Hall 1964 History 161). "As everyone now knows, the inscription was composed in 1292 . . ." (Griswold 1968 Historian’s Debt 66).

In his Notes critiques (1918, p. 12-25), Coedes explains the reasons for choosing 1292 as the probable date for the inscription, and for choosing the episode of the installation of the stone throne as the probable purpose of the inscription. He explains that previously he had adopted the date 1292 for the wrong reasons by following a certain argument advanced by Bradley, but now he does not believe in that argument anymore. He then goes on to show that, by combining the episode of the excavation and reenshrinement of the relics in 1285 with the episode of the setting up of the stone throne in 1292, and with a passage in the Yuan history dealing with an embassy from Sukhothai (Sien) to the Mongol court in China, the same date of 1292 still appears as the probable year in which the inscription was made, although for other reasons than Bradley and he had previously thought. Coedes concludes that the date 1292 is probable, although the inscription could have been engraved two or three years after the installation of the stone throne, and that the probable objective of the inscription was to commemorate the installation of the stone throne.

In other words: Coedes thought that the objective of the inscription probably was to record the installation of the stone throne in 1292, which is the reason why the inscription should date from that time. The same argumentation is also found in Griswold / Prasôt 1971 Inscr. Râm Khamhông 194.

Six years later, Coedes again explained his reasoning concerning the purpose of the inscription (Coedes 1924 Recueil 38) : "He thought it likely but not really proven ("Il est à peu près hors de doute..."). That the objective of the inscription was to commemorate the consecration of the stone throne in 1292 because that year seemed to have been of special importance to King Râm Khamhông since it was in 1292 that the king began his relation with the Mongol court in China: "Il est à peu près hors de doute... qu'elle (the inscription; HP) avait pour objet de commémorer l’installation... du trône de pierre... en cette année 1292 A.D. qui semble marquer dans le règne de Râm Gampôn une date capitale, puisque c’est alors qu’il entra pour la première fois en relation avec la Cour de Chine". Thus, the reasoning of Coedes hinges on one point: the year 1292, in which year he thought the king had inaugurated his stone throne and also had contacted the Mongol-Chinese court.

Coedes did not explain why contacting the Mongol court was such an important event, and what the stone throne had to do with it. The reader is left to speculate on his own that perhaps Râm Khamhông, having contacted the Mongol court, had been granted certain privileges or assurances by Kublai Khan in 1292 and therefore now felt free to establish himself as a ruler with a throne which was such an important event that it became the main subject of the inscription, which in turn would mean that the inscription was written in 1292 or shortly afterwards.

However, there is no contact attested between Sukhothai and the Mongol court in 1292, which breaks Coedes’ chain of argumentation.

The historical source that Coedes used, as he says himself (1924 Recueil 38 and 1964 Etats 372), was a passage from the Yuan Shih (in Thai: พุทธา) as quoted by Pelliot 1904 Deux itinéraires 242. In English translation, it reads: "November 26, 1292: The Pacification Office of the Kwangtung Circuit sent a person who arrived at the capital bearing a golden missive proferred by the chief of the country of Hsien" (Flood 1969 Sukhothai-Mongol Relations 223).

Coedes (1917 Documents 33) was satisfied that Pelliot had definitely identified Hsien "avec la région de la Haute-Mênam ou royaume de Sukhodaya." Pelliot, on the basis of Ming and Yuan sources, had advanced the following reasoning: Siam originally consisted of two countries. One was the kingdom of Hsien; it was hilly ("accidenté") and little fertile. The other was the kingdom of Lo-hou; it was flat and very fertile. These geographical conditions meant to Pelliot that Hsien must have been on the upper Mênam (มา่น้ำใหญ่), and Lo-hou on the lower Menam. Lo-hou was Lop Buri. Hsien must have been the kingdom of Sukhothai, because it was to the north of Lop Buri, and because inscription no. 1 attests to Siamese power at Sukhothai (Pelliot 1904 Deux itinéraires 235, 244).

It is still unknown where exactly Hsien was, but there are enough indications to show that at around 1300, Hsien did not mean Sukhothai but referred to some city lower in Thailand and closer to the ocean than Sukhothai.

The reasoning that Hsien, a hilly and rather barren land, must be north of Lop Buri, is immediately suspect because there is such a type of land also in other directions from Lop Buri. For some years now, it has therefore been argued that Hsien should have been somewhere in the delta of the Ma Nam Jao Phraya, or in southwest central Thailand, or even further down south (i.e. Chand 1972 Review; Griswold 1967 Towards 259; Vickery 1978 Guide 205; Vickery 1979 New Tamnan 134, 155-156). I shall not repeat the reasons but will mention some arguments that I find particularly striking.

Chou Ta-kuan, the Chinese envoy, flatly stated that Hsien / Siam, in 1296-97 when he visited Angkor, was 15 days
southwest of Angkor (Chou Ta-kuan / Paul 1967 Notes 9). However, Sukhothai is northwest of Angkor.

The cultures of Hsien and Sukhothai seem to have been quite different. Hsien was a state that was known to habitually practice and to some extent live on piracy; their staple food was sago, not rice. A Chinese source, the Tao I Chih Lio which is thought to have been composed towards A.D. 1350, has this to say about Hsien: "The people of Hsien are much given to piracy; whenever there is an uprising in any other country, they at once embark in as many as a hundred junkes with full cargo of sago (as food) and start off and by the vigor of their attack they secure what they want. (Thus) in recent years they came with seventy odd junkes and raided Tan-ma-hsi (= Temasek = Singapore or Johore) and attacked the city moat. (The town) resisted for a month, the place having closed its gates and defending itself, and they not daring to assault it. It happened just that an Imperial envoy (of the Chinese court) was passing by (Tan-ma-hsi), so the men of Hsien drew off and hid, after plundering Hsi-li" (Rockhill 1915 Notes 99-100).

Perhaps it is also helpful to note that the Sayăm on the famous Angkor bas-relief may have originated from or may have been related to inhabitants of west-central Thailand, because their particular hairdo is similar to that of people from Old U Thong (Khan 1966 Folk Art fig. 1; original in U Thong National Museum). Further, the chronicle Jinakalamali, written in 1516-1527, includes the regions of Chiang Mai, Lamphun and Lamphong in Siamadesa (JKM.C. 73, 96, 115). This again is an old Mon area. From all of that one might perhaps consider that around 1300, Hsien, Sien, Sayăm etc. had something to do with Mon or with Mon-related people, and not with Thai, an idea that was already envisaged by Vickery 1979 New Tamman 137 n.81.

Lastly, when the Yuan Shih wants to mention Sukhothai, it says so. There is a passage in it stating that on 5 June 1299, the barbarians of "Hainan, Su-ku-t'ai, Su-long-tan and Pen-hsi arrived at court bearing tribute of tigers, elephants and sha-lo wood boats" (Flood 1969 Sukhothai-Mongol Relations 226).

Thus, Hsien was not Sukhothai and the first attested contact between Sukhothai and the Mongol Chinese court was in 1299, not in 1292.

The assumed objective of the inscription, the commemoration of the inauguration of the stone throne, also is not evident from the inscription itself. The matter of the stone slab occurs only on face 3, lines 10-19 (crafting, inauguration and use of a stone slab) and then again on the same face, lines 26-27 (indicating the name of the stone slab as Manang Slla Bat). Before, in between and after these two passages, entirely different matter is being dealt with. If the stone slab was what really mattered in the inscription, one would expect it to have been accorded a more prominent place and a more extensive treatment, and not to have been mentioned twice rather lightly in the third quarter or at the end of the inscription (Coedes 1924 Recueil 38 considers face 4, lines 11-27 a postscript; Griswold / Prasöj 1971 Inscr. Râm Khamhâng 192-193 think that all of face 4 may be composed of two postscripts: lines 1-11 and 11-27). The matter of the stone slab appears too much hidden away in the inscription and too much treated as just one item among the many items written down, for it to have been the main subject or the objective of the inscription.

If indeed the stone slab had some particular importance for the inscription, then the inscription may perhaps better be described as an eulogy of King Râm Khamhâng which includes his descent, his biography and a description of his prosperous country; the eulogy was set up at a stone seat that had been installed by the king and that was regularly used by religious leaders and the king, which was something that the king regarded as one of or as the most important deed(s) he did in his life. This would mean that the inscription was written by the king after the stone seat had been in use for a certain time because the inscription explains how and when it was used, but before the death of the king because after his death no other person would write the eulogy. The "postscripts" which expand the eulogy perhaps also would have been written during the lifetime of the king. Such self-praising or rather self-appraising eulogies were common in the old time (see Khmer inscriptions; also the Wat Phra Yûn inscription from Lamphun, c.137; text edition and translation in Griswold / Prasöj 1974 Inscr. Wat Phra Yûn); they were more a religious than a political (and not a boastful) act: a statement of who the person is and what his merits are.

Similarly, the objective of inscription no. 2 (text edition and translation in Griswold / Prasöj 1972 King Lôdiaiâ), which contains one principal eulogy but also praises some other persons, may not have been to record the restoration of the Mahâ Thât in Sukhothai. Rather, the inscription may have been written on the occasion of, or even after, the restoration of the Mahâ Thât and then was installed at the Mahâ Thât because its restoration was regarded by the person involved as one of his important deeds.

To sum up: The old reasons for dating inscription no. 1 to 1292 are not convincing because the objective of the inscription cannot have been to record the installation of a stone throne in 1292 following Sukhothai's contact with the Mongol court.

But even the year 1292 for the installation of the stone throne is not entirely certain; it may have been 1305-06. The inscription says (face 3, lines 10-13):

1214 สะปกไม่เช่นยังหนุ่มวัยผิ่น...ปลูกไม้ทานใต้ศิลป์บารียุ่งให้
ช่างแก่พันครั้ง จง hạnhกีฬาไม้ทาน

Añjan Phithayà Bunnâk (Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University) points out to me, and I agree, that the text can be translated in a simple, straightforward way:

"In A.D. 1292, King Râm Khamhâng . . . planted these sugar-palm trees. After 14 years (= A.D. 1305-06), he had craftsmen make a stone slab and set it up among these sugar-palm trees."
Thus, inscription no. 1 may date from 1292-96 or 1305-06, because those are the last years referred to in the inscription, or else it may date from a few years later, but it should have been written during the lifetime of King Râm Khamhâng, perhaps including the "postscripts."

The "Mongol Passage"

Coedes saw Mongol influence on Sukhōthai social and political thinking as revealed by inscription no. 1; he saw a similarity between the structure of Râm Khamhâng's government and that of the Mongol khans (Coedes 1962 Peoples 137), and also a similarity in political and filial behaviour (Coedes 1964 Etats 358). But while he cautiously formulates his ideas, others who obviously copy from him are less cautious. Coedes' "une certaine dose d'inspiration mongole dans la structure sociale" (1962 Peoples 136-137) and "(les princes thai) semblent ... s'être inspirés de l'exemple des Mongoles, dont la prodigieuse épopée devait frapper leur imagination ... l'inscription de Rama K'amheng ... sonne même parfois comme un écho de la geste de Gengis Khan" (1964 Etats 347) become "King Rama modelled his institutions closely on Mongol examples; his great inscription ... seems to have echoed the language of Genghiz Khan, and the King may have been an actual ally of the Great Khan ... he visited Peking in 1294 ..." (FitzGerald 1972 Southern Expansion 80-81).

A certain passage from the inscription was particularly in Coedes' mind. It is the passage on face 1 where Ram Khamhâng says of himself: "When I went hunting elephants, I brought them to my father. When I raided a town or village and captured elephants, young men or women of rank, silver or gold, I turned them over to my father." For Coedes, this passage was too close to the oath of the electors of Genghis Khan than to be just a coincidence: "Ce passage rappelle de façon trop exacte pour être fortuite le serment des électeurs de Gengis Khan" (1964 Etats 347). The Mongol text that Coedes refers to is the oath of Genghis Khan's three electors as recorded in the Secret History of the Mongols: "Nous avons décidé de te proclamer khan. Nous marchonvers l'avant-garde, dans la bataille; si nous enlevons des femmes et des filles, nous te les donnerons. Nous irons à la chasse, au premier rang; si nous prenons du gibier, nous te le donnerons" (Vladimirsof in Grousset 1960 L'empire 258).

If the passage in the inscription was inspired by the Secret History, then there is a difficulty. The Mongol alphabet was created in 1269 (Hirth 1887 Chinese Oriental College 211) or about 40 years later, c. 1310 (up to 1272, the Mongols had used Uighur letters and then Tibetan letters from 1272 to c. 1310; Encycl. Britannia, 1983 edition). The Secret History was composed in the Mongol language between 1228-1264 and existed in Chinese transcription (not yet translation) only since 1368 (dtv Brockhaus Lexikon, 1984 edition).

This means that at the time of Râm Khamhâng, knowledge of the Mongol epos certainly was restricted, and abroad
probably non-existent. Unless there were at present unknown close relations between Sukhothai and the Mongol court, Ram Khamhâng would not have had the detailed knowledge of the Secret History which permitted him to use a certain passage from it for his inscription. Until such close ties can be demonstrated from other sources (they are not apparent from the official Yuan history), one has to assume that either the similarity between the two passages is a coincidence, or else that the inscription was composed at an indefinite and possibly much later time, after the Secret History had become known in Thailand, where then a short passage was adapted for an inscription dealing with Sukhothai and one of its former kings, Ram Khamhâng.

Thus, Mongol influence on Sukhothai society can probably be ruled out. However, the choice between a coincidental similarity of the two passages (which would mean that the inscription dates from 1292-c. 1305 or a few years later) and a plagiarism or adaptation perhaps centuries later (which would mean an equally reduced age of the inscription), cannot safely be made without further evidence.

The Jindâmani Evidence

Jindâmani (จินดา曼城 from P. cintâmaṇi) is the collective name of a group of works intended as primers or reference books on correct orthography and versification. There are quite a number of Jindâmani manuscripts, some very different from others.

The usual opinion seems to be that the author of the first Jindâmani probably was the royal chief astrologer, Horâthibodi (P. horâdhipati) who may have originated from or may have lived for some time in Sukhothai and/or Phijit, that he composed the Jindâmani by order of King Narâi in 1672, and that he also may have been the author of the so-called Luang Prasôt Chronicle, composed in 1680. That opinion was first put forward by Prince Damrong in 1932 and was later repeated and somewhat deepened by Thanit Yupho (see: Silapâ Bannâkhân 1961 Jindâmani 146-151). King Narâi ruled from 1656 to 1688.

Prince Damrong and Thanit Yupho based their view on three notes contained in Jindâmani manuscripts. The first note is found in nearly all the Usual Jindâmanis (see below) and says:

จินดา曼城 เจ้าพระราชาธิบดี กระทรวงชุ่มชื่น มุ่งมั่นศึกษา แต่คงทาย แต่ครั้ง สมเด็จพระราชาธิบดีจำจัดพรุย

"The chief astrologer who formerly lived in Mûâng Sukhothai, composed this Jindâmani and presented it to King Narâi, Lord of Lop Buri."

The second note is found in one of the Unusual Jindâmanis (JM.NLB/93; see below) and says:

Page 16, line
(2) ... ฟ้าชุดศิลปะราช 104 ปีจารึกยิ่งพระยา
(3) จึงเรียกผู้มีพื้นแพร่จิตรคำแนะนำ... .

The date, C.S. 104, obviously is defective. Since the name of the year is given, Chuat, and since it is thought that the time of King Narâi is meant, the date is understood as C.S. 1034 = A.D. 1672.

"In A.D. 1672, the learned royal teacher composed the Jindâmani for presentation to His Majesty."

The third note is from the end of one (or several) Usual Jindâmani manuscript(s) and says in verse form that the learned chief astrologer (พระปรามณฑล) originally was from Okha Buri (ไชยศรี), which Prince Damrong and Thanit understood to mean Mûâng Phijit (Silapâ Bannâkhân 1961 Jindâmani 147-148).

Thanit Yupho classified the Jindâmanis into four main groups (Silapâ Bannâkhân 1961 Jindâmani 128 ff). Group no. 1 is made up of only a few manuscripts which are, however, quite different from the others. A particular characteristic is that they have a preface on the origin of Thai letters which is not found in other Jindâmanis. Thanit calls this group Usual Jindâmani which Prince Damrong and Thanit calls "Jindâmani with strange contents," or "Unusual Jindâmani." Group no. 2 is by far the largest group with more or less similar contents though requiring a division into four subgroups. Thanit calls this group Usual Jindâmani with identical contents" or, somewhat freely but perhaps more to the point, "Jindâmani with ordinary contents," "Usual Jindâmani." Groups no. 3 and no. 4 consist of only a few items, all 19th century creations, such as Prince Wongsaâthîrât Sani's "Second Volume of Jindâmani," composed in 1849 (group no. 3), and Bradley's Jindâmani anthology cum dictionary (group no. 4).

The Unusual Jindâmanis are of interest here because of their introductory note on the origin of the Thai letters.

The oldest known Unusual Jindâmani manuscript is in the Royal Asiatic Society in London. It is a leporello paper manuscript which has a date equivalent to A.D. 1732 and which in the following shall be called JM.RAS. Dr. Henry Ginsburg of the British Library in London kindly informs me in a letter dated 10 March 1988 that this manuscript is no. 8 in a collection of about 25 Thai manuscripts that there is no information on its origin.

Of this manuscript, the late Professor Khajon Sukhaphanit ขาวสุทธพนิทร had a microfilm made which he gave to the Fine Arts Department, Bangkok. It is now in the National Library and has become quite brittle. From that microfilm, the text of the manuscript was first printed in 1961 under the title จินดา曼城 ฉบับพระราชาธิบดี("Jindâmani, version of Phra Jao Boroma Kot," which was included in a book on the subject of Jindâmani (Silapâ Bannâkhân 1961 Jindâmani 158 ff). An identical reprint was made in 1969, and a third edition with a slightly different pagination appeared in 1971. King Boroma Kot of
Ayutthaya may have had nothing to do with this Jindāmāni, but 1732 was the first year of his reign, hence the title of the publication.

Judging by the microfilm, it seems that the manuscript is made of black paper and that the letters are written in gold colour, now somewhat faded. Each page has five lines of writing. Each line of writing is marked by a horizontal line that is drawn across the page. The upper part of the letters touch the line but the end of the long stroke of tall letters like ฃ, the tone marks and the vowel i are above the line. Definite traces of use and insect attack as well as general marks of age are apparent.

Still according to the microfilm, it seems that, if one opens the first fold of the manuscript, the upper page has the title of the book: หน้าหัว สมุทรพจน์ จินตนาเม "Front Page, Book of Jindāmāni."

The lower page has five lines of writing. The first three lines contain the introductory note or preface:

(1) อันเห็นได้จากข้อหมายเหตุว่า ศึกษาราย 645 แนบมาพร้อมกับจารึกของจินตนาเม เล่มเดียวแล้ว

(2) (ฝรั่งเศส)เห็นได้ว่าแต่รูปถีกเดิมมีอักษรย่อชิ้นนี้ได้ไว้ในจารึก ยอดหน้าจนถึงสั้น ๆ กทก กษ

(3) ฉะนั้น เทียบกับการเรียนรู้ในแต่ละปี เท่ากับการเรียนรู้ในแต่ละปี อักษรไทย

"An old document (s) state (s) that in A.D. 1283, after he had obtained Mūang Sī Sachanālai, Phaya Rong devised the Thai writing system (tāng nangsī Thai). It is not clearly stated whether he devised the form (tāng rûp) or whether he devised the letters themselves (tāng mā akson). (Because) the letter combinations (mā nangsī) from kkā, kn, etc. to kêo you had already been devised in the Khom country, I think that Phaya Rōng only devised the form of the Thai letters (tāng tā rûp akson Thai)." (Tentative translation.)

The remaining two lines on this page consist of a date that is elaborately expressed in Buddhakāraśā (… พระพุทธศตวรรษวันไม่แล้วได้ 2275 พรรษา …) and Culasakkarāja (… กุศ ศึกษารายได้ 1094 ศก …) and which corresponds to A.D. 1732. Since nothing else is added, that should be the date of the manuscript.

The preface on the Thai letters and the date of the manuscript seem to be integral parts of the manuscript and not later interpolations because the handwriting looks the same as in the rest of the manuscript.

The subject matter of the book then begins on the top page of the next fold with the words: อักษรจูงตั้งค้น คำตรง คือ ข่า …

A comparison between the microfilm and the printed version (JM.RAS 1961) shows that the latter is nearly, but not exactly, identical with the original. I cannot say if the manuscript also contains the remark on the author of the Jindāmāni, the royal teacher, because I did not dare to run the whole brittle microfilm through the reading machine; but the printed version does not contain that note.

The National Library in Bangkok is in possession of several Jindāmāni manuscripts. At least three among them belong to the category Unusual Jindāmāni. They are catalogued as

จินตนาเม 5; formerly: 1/ก (= JM.NLB/5; my code)
จินตนาเม 25; formerly: 1 (= JM.NLB/25)
จินตนาเม 93; formerly: 1/ธ (= JM.NLB/93)

All manuscripts are black paper leporello books of a size roughly 12 x 36 cm, written in gold-colour ink. None of them is dated. Judging solely by their appearance, the oldest would be JM.NLB/5 followed by the two others which look newer. The manuscript JM.NLB/5 was part of the original funds of the National Library. JM.NLB/25 was received in 1909 from Prince Damrong, and JM.NLB/93 in 1936 from the Department of the Secretary-General to the Council of Ministers กษม ราชการคณะราษฎร.

The preface on the devising of Thai letters is more or less identical in all three manuscripts of the Bangkok National Library, and is in substance close to the preface of the manuscript in the Royal Asiatic society.

Here is, as an example, the preface of JM.NLB/93:

Page 1

(1) ศึกษาราย 645 ปีละมีมาก พยายามจะจัดถึงด้วยอังกฤษศัพท์ใด ซึ่งแต่ง

(2) หนังสือใบเล่มอักษรกิจสำหรับต่างมากที่แต่งจนถึงนี้ก็อย่างที่กษม และมีมาก

(3) แต่แต่งอักษรกิจสำหรับ จะแต่งได้แต่งเป็นบริการทางการศึกษาก็นี้ นอกจากนี้

(4) ผู้จะอ่านเกี่ยวกับอักษรกิจ และนี้แม่นยำเพื่อทำการศึกษา หาข้อมูล

Page 2

(1) เมื่อชอบเกี่ยวกับอักษรภูมิแล้ว พยายามจะจัดเรียงแต่งเป็นอักษรกิจในต่าง ต่าง...

"In A.D. 1283, after he had obtained Mūang Sī Sachanālai, Phaya Ruang devised the Thai writing system (tāng nangsī Thai) and all the letters (mā akson) according to the spoken language. It is not clear whether at the time he only devised the letters (tāng tā mā akson), and whether the arrangement was conventional or unconventional (tāng pen pokoti witathān), (but) the students found reading and writing to be very difficult. (Because) the letter combinations (mā nangsī) from kkā to kn etc. and on to key had already been devised in the Khom country, Phaya Ruang only devised the form of the various Thai letters (tāng tā rûp akson Thai tāng rûp)." (Tentative translation.)
"Phayā Rong" in the JM.RAS preface should be the same as "Phaya Ruang" in the JM.NLB prefaces; it could be an older form or a local variant of the name.

That Phayā Ruang had something to do with the "invention" of Thai letters, or else was strong in magic and had superior knowledge, is corroborated by the existence of a number of tales of unknown origin and age that were current during the Ayuthaya period. Phra Wichian Prichā (Nai) included one of them in his Phongsāwādān Nūa which he composed from old sources and finished in 1807. These stories give no date for the "invention" of the Thai letters.

According to the tale in Phongsāwādān Nūa, Phra Jao Arun Rāt alias Phayā Ruang (พระเจ้าอาرونрат) lived around B.S. 1000 (A.D. 457), C.S. 119 (A.D. 757). For the purpose of cancelling the Buddhasakkaraja (พระพุทธสากุระจาระ), he called a conference of the major kings. On that occasion, he ordered the devising of the Thai Chiang, Mon, Burmese, Thai, Khöm Chiang and Khöm letters (พระธนธาตุเมื่อท่านมหาปิยกรุณา legally, devised in the year: PN' 1914. 9-10; Pn' 1963. 9-10).

The classical Sukhōthai historical sources such as inscriptions do not mention a king Phayā Ruang. The name seems to occur only in sources from countries around Sukhōthai and may be attested in primary sources only since about A.D. 1500. The oldest source known to me is an unpublished inscription from Phayao dated A.D. 1498 (ALI 1.5.1.1 Wat Phayā Ruang 2041 / 1498). The sources which mention a Phayā Ruang therefore may not be contemporary to events in Sukhōthai / Śi Sachanalai around 1250-1350; they could be more recent and "foreign" sources. Ruang was understood to mean "shining, brilliant, full of light" because sources written in Pali have translations of the king's name such as Rocarāja (raudakālamāli); likewise, in the story of the Phongsāwādān Nūa mentioned above, the king is called Phra Jao Arun Rāt "King Arun" (P. roca, aruṇa).

The name Phayā Ruang has in many cases to be freely translated as "a king (or prince) of Sukhōthai / Śi Sachanalai" because it is not possible to identify the particular ruler. It may be that originally Phayā Ruang meant only the first of the Sukhōthai monarchs, King Śi Indrapatindrādiya or Indrāditya, whose title was understood to mean "Lord Sun" or "Lord Light." In the Traibhumikāthā, composed in 1345 (?), the word aditya of the title is exchanged for the synonymous sūrya and the author Phayā Lū Thai is called "grandson of Phayā Ramaśāya who belonged to the (King) Sun dynasty" (exordium TBK.KW' 1972.9. ตาขัสสรุตการะ; colophon TBK.KW' 1972.326. ตาขัสสรุตการะ). In later times, the Traibhumikāthā was known simply as Trai Phûm Phra Ruang. It appears therefore that later authors, particularly if living far from Sukhōthai, may not have been aware that Ruang was not a personal name but the name of the dynasty derived from the title of its founder, which is why our sources use Phaya Ruang, Rocarāja etc. seemingly for any of the Sukhōthai kings.

The date 1283 mentioned in the Jindāmanī prefaces for the devising of Thai writing by Phaya Ruang is also mentioned in inscription no. 1 for the devising of Thai letters by King Rām Khamhang. Those two seem to be the only sources which have a date for the "invention" of the Thai script.

The unexplained technical matter in the "old document" concerning the exact nature or provenance of the Thai letters, commented upon by the author of the Jindāmanī preface, is also not explained in inscription no. 1 (face 4, lines 9-11):

"Pho Khun Rām Khamhang had the deep wish to fix (the shape of ?) these Thai letters (sai lāi sī Thai nǐ). These Thai letters exist because he set them up (sai wai)."

Thus, the Unusual Jindāmanī prefaces deal only with one item, the devising of a Thai writing system, for which they have four details all of which are compatible with what is said in inscription no. 1, viz., time: A.D. 1283; place: Śi Sachanalai / Sukhōthai; person involved: Phaya Ruang / Pho Khun Rām Khamhang; no technical details concerning the letters.

The transfer of name and place, Rām Khamhang > Ruang, and Sukhōthai > Śi Sachanalai, is another example of the change that past events underwent in later writings: a specific monarch in Sukhōthai becomes an anonymous Phaya Ruang of Śi Sachanalai or Sukhōthai.

But all of that does not mean that the Jindāmanī evidence proves 1292 or 1306 or another definite year to be the date of inscription no. 1. It only shows (1) that in 1732, perhaps already in 1672, there was a claim or tradition that, according to an unspecified, old and vaguely worded document, Phaya Ruang (Rong) had devised a Thai writing system in 1283 after he had obtained Śi Sachanalai; and (2) that in 1732 or already in 1672, an obviously knowledgeable person commented that in his opinion Phayā Ruang did not actually invent the whole system, because it had already been in use in the "Khöm country," but only devised the form of the Thai letters.

It results from the above that the Jindāmanī evidence does not directly answer the question of the age of inscription no. 1 but only corroborates part of the contents of the inscription. On the basis of that corroboration, the inscription should be centuries older than 1732 or 1672 and should date from the Sukhōthai period.

Conclusion

The discussion in this article has produced the following results concerning the date of the inscription. (1) The traditional reasons for dating inscription no. 1 to 1292 are not
convincing; yet, because of other reasons, the inscription may date from that year or from a few years later, for instance from 1305-1306 or even later, but should date from a time when King Râm Khamhâng was still alive. (2) The "Mongol Passage" leaves a choice between the same period and an indefinite but possibly much later time. (3) The preface of the Unusual Jindâmanî points to a date in the plain Sukhôthai period.

Therefore, on the basis of what has been discussed in this article, there appears to be no sufficient reason to move the traditionally accepted date of the inscription to a much more recent time. The evidence seems to point to a date within a period of about two decades beginning with 1292.

As for the objective of the inscription, it would seem that the inscription was intended as a comprehensive eulogy of King Râm Khamhâng, perhaps written some years after the installation of the stone seat Manang Sîlâ Bât which was of religious and secular importance.

I am aware of the fragility of much that has been put forward in this paper. Many conclusions were arrived at only by weighing probabilities and by judging from appearances. It is therefore likely that in future corrections will have to be made. In a sense, the present article is only an interim assessment based on limited material.

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