

## Which Ratanapañña Composed The Jinakālamālī?

Hans Penth\*

### Summary

The text and colophon of the chronicle *Jinakālamālī* (JKM) say that the author was the monk Ratanapañña who wrote the work in Wat Pā Däng (Chiang Mai) in 1516-17. At the beginning of this century it was noticed that the chronicle mentions two further monks with the same name — Ratanapañña — one from Phayao and one from Lampāng, and it was thought that the author of JKM was one of them, not the one mentioned in the colophon and text. This was countered by the argument that the author should indeed be the monk mentioned in text and colophon, but perhaps he had moved from Lampāng or Phayao to Chiang Mai. A stone inscription from Phayao confirms that there was a Ratanapañña at Phayao and it reports on the monk's official contact with the King of Chiang Mai. Besides, the inscription and internal evidence from JKM itself point to the possibility that 'Ratanapañña' was not, or was not always, a proper monastic name but a sobriquet for a clever, learned monk. The name and identity of JKM's author remain uncertain.

In 1907, Phrayā Prachākit Kōrajak stated in his *Phongsāwadān Yōnok*, on page 200, that the monk Ratanapaññañña of Wat Bodhārāma (i.e., Wat Jet Yòt), Chiang Mai, composed the chronicle *Jinakālamālīnī* พระรัตนปัญญาณะเถรเจ้า วัดโพธารามเมืองเชียงใหม่ ... (แต่) คัมภีร์ชื่อชินกาลมาลีนี้. With our present knowledge, one would correct 'Ratanapaññañña' to 'Ratanapañña', 'Wat Bodhārāma' to 'Wat Pā Däng' (Ratavana[mahā]vihāra), and '-mālīnī' to '-mālinī'.

The phrayā presumably was aware that there were two more monks with the name Ratanapañña (besides 'Ratanapaññañña,' the author of JKM) because on page 262 - 263 he relates that in 1511 a ceremony took place in Wat Bupphārām วัดบุพพาราม to delimit the ordination premises (baddhasīmā) ผูกพัทธสีมา. He gives a list of more than twenty monks present, among whom were a mahāthera Ratanapañña from Phayao and another mahāthera Ratanapañña from Lampāng. The phrayā evidently had obtained this episode from JKM<sup>2</sup> which has a great many details on this ceremony and from which it is apparent that the event actually took place in Wat Jet Yòt (Mahābodhārāma).

\* *Archive of Lan Na Inscriptions, Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University.*  
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The errors are understandable because at the time JKM was available only as palmleaf manuscript copies, written in Khmer letters and the Pāli language. Neither the original text nor a translation had yet been published.

In his Preface to the first printed edition of JKM in 1908,<sup>3</sup> Prince Damrong Rajanubhab referred to the 'end' of JKM ข้างท้ายหนังสือ (i.e., the colophon) where, according to him, it is said that in 1516 the monk Ratanapañña พระรัตนปัญญา, who lived in the Ratanamahāvihāra วัดรัตนมหาวิหาร (i.e., Wat Pā Dāng, Chiang Mai), wrote the *Jinakālamālinī* หนังสือชินกาลมาลินี.

In the next paragraph the Prince referred to the above-mentioned episode of 1511. He noted that according to Phrayā Prachākit's *Phongsāwadān Yōnok*, page 263, there were two Ratanapaññas, one from Phayao and one from Lampāng, who in that year assisted in a ceremony at Wat Bupphārām. He concluded that Ratanapañña, author of JKM, must have been one of these two, and not the one who lived in Chiang Mai: พระรัตนปัญญา ผู้แต่งหนังสือชินกาลมาลินี คงเป็นองค์หนึ่งในสององค์นี้ มิได้เป็นผู้อยู่ในเมืองนครเชียงใหม่.

That conclusion was rejected by Coedès in 1915 on the grounds that the mention of two Ratanapaññas in 1511—one from Phayao and one from Lampāng—does not weaken the testimony of JKM's colophon, which clearly states that Ratanapañña lived in the Rattavanavihāra (of Chiang Mai) and wrote the book in 1516. Coedès added that even if one does not believe in the existence of three monks of the same name, one could always assume that one of the two Ratanapaññas of Phayao or Lampāng had come to live in Wat Pā Dāng between 1511 and 1516.<sup>4</sup>

It is indeed surprising that the numerically rather small and somewhat elitist school of *Sihālabhikkhus*<sup>5</sup> should have had three monks of the same name in three cities. Also, JKM's author presumably attended the ceremony in Wat Jet Yòt in 1511 where, according to the list of monks attending, there was no Ratanapañña from Chiang Mai. The conclusion that Ratanapañña, author of JKM, was either from Phayao or Lampāng, at least originally, is therefore not unjustified.

At present, after seventy-five years, the question of whether JKM's author was from Chiang Mai, Phayao or Lampāng, is still unsettled. If anything, an inscription has added a new twist to the argument. To understand this better, we will first have another look at what is found in the chronicle about its author.

In the JKM text proper, the author says of himself: "I wrote this (book) *Jinakālamālinī* during these 2 years (i.e., 1516 and 1517)."<sup>6</sup> Since the context deals with Wat Pā Dāng at Chiang Mai, the passage implies that he wrote the chronicle in that monastery.

The colophon elaborates: “In 1516, Ratanapañña, a monk for 23 years and living in Wat Pā Dāng (Rattavanavihāra), wrote the book Jinakālamālī.”<sup>7</sup>

These two statements permit the composition of a short biography of the monk:

c. 1473 born

c. 1493 ordained a full monk

1516-17 wrote JKM at the age of c. forty-three, having been a monk for twenty-three years, and lived in Wat Pā Dāng, Chiang Mai

1527 discontinued updating JKM at the age of c. fifty-four.<sup>8</sup>

It is unknown what later became of him.

‘Ratanapañña’ perhaps was not his proper monastic name or *chāyā* ฉายา, but an additional given name alluding to his great abilities or qualities because the colophon also says:

Vasanto yati yo tattha tena raññīpatthambhito

Paññāratanaṃ asseti Ratanapaññaṣaṅgīto.<sup>9</sup>

This somewhat delicate passage was translated slightly differently by Coedès, Jayawickrama and Säng.

Coedès: “Les religieux habitant dans ce (monastère) disaient: «Ce religieux qui est protégé par ce roi est son joyau de sagesse (paññāratana)»; c’est pourquoi il fut nommé Ratanapañña.”<sup>10</sup>

Jayawickrama: “Whosoever sage who was living there receiving that king’s active patronage, was given the name Ratanapañña as wisdom (paññā) to him was a jewel (ratana).”<sup>11</sup>

Säng: “พระภิกษุผู้ชื่อว่า รัตนปัญญา เพราะมีปัญญาเพียงดั่งว่า รัตนะ.” (“The monk was named Ratanapañña because he had paññā like a jewel”).<sup>12</sup>

Whichever translation one prefers, it is obvious that the passage tries to explain the name Ratanapañña as a word-play which refers to the monk’s bright intellect, and it is also possible to understand that the others called him Ratanapañña in addition to, or replacing, his correct monastic name which is not mentioned. Ratanapañña may have been a sobriquet—an honourable nickname.

The two notions, that Ratanapañña (author of JKM) originally perhaps was from Phayao, and that ‘Ratanapañña’ perhaps was not his real monastic name but a later popularly given one, receives some corroboration from the stone inscription of Wat Wisuttha-Ārām near Phayao, dated 1506.<sup>13</sup> The inscription records certain donations to the monastery and says at the beginning: “Somdet Mahāsāmi Śrī Vimalabodhiñña, Abbot in (= of Wat) Pā Dāng Luang, ordered the Mahāthera Jayabāla Ratanapañña to request permission from the Mahādhammarājādhirāja (= Phayā Kāo, King of Chiang Mai) to set up an inscription (confirming grants) in Wat Visuddha-ārāma, Mōng Phayāo.”

The mahāsāmi presumably was the superior, *somdet*, of the Sīhaḷabhikkhus in the Phayao region and Abbot of Wat Pā Däng Luang at Phayao.<sup>14</sup> The senior monk, a mahāthera, whom he charged with the administratively not unusual, yet always delicate, mission to the King in Chiang Mai,<sup>15</sup> most probably also was a Sīhaḷabhikkhu, perhaps of the mahāsāmi's own monastery, or of Wat Wisuttha-Ārām. This monk had a curious name, Jayabāla Ratanapañña.<sup>16</sup> It does not seem to be one long name, the different parts of which normally have one overall sense, but rather two names, the first the 'real' monastic name, Jayabāla—"Guardian of the Victory,"<sup>17</sup> and the other a descriptive addition, Ratanapañña—"who has a clever mind."

It is therefore possible to surmise that this adept monk, who resided at or near Phayao and perhaps was a native of that region, while on his mission to Chiang Mai in 1506, attracted the attention of the King and of the abbot of Wat Pā Däng and that later he moved to Wat Pā Däng in Chiang Mai. In 1511, he took part in the ceremony at Wat Jet Yòt. In Chiang Mai, his descriptive sobriquet—"the clever one"—Ratanapañña, became the name under which he was commonly known. He used it twice in his *Jinakālamāli*, in the Wat Jet Yòt episode of 1511 and in the colophon (if he wrote the latter himself) where both times he referred to himself in the third person as Ratanapañña. However, on one occasion, in the text, he spoke of himself in the first person without adding his name.

But this is speculation. The Phayao inscription in fact only confirms what JKM states, viz., that at the time there was also a Ratanapañña at or from Phayao, and it may confirm something already suspected from the colophon, viz. that the name 'Ratanapañña' was either a proper monastic name or a very honourable sobriquet that could be applied to more than one monk.

Since the Wat Pā Däng monks certainly were smart and learned, several among them could have been known as a 'Ratanapañña', among them one Chiang Mai monk who wrote JKM. It is not really necessary to have one come from Phayao or Lampāng in order to reduce an improbably high number of namesakes. But then the question arises, did the author of JKM not attend the ceremony in Wat Jet Yòt in 1511 since his name is not mentioned ?

Assuming that Ratanapañña (author of JKM) was at Wat Jet Yòt in 1511 and that his name is included in the list of monks attending the ceremony, he was either from Phayao or from Lampāng (one of the two Ratanapaññas listed), or else he figures in the list under another name, viz. under his correct monastic name which we ignore.

Thus, the question remains: which Ratanapañña wrote JKM ? Further, a new question arises: was Ratanapañña his monastic name or his sobriquet ?

## Notes

1. Either Wat Suan Dòk (Pupphārāma), west of Chiang Mai, or Wat Bupphārām (Pubbārāma), east of the walled city, on today's Thā Phā Road. The Thai spelling used here can indicate either.
2. JKM.C: 120-21; JKM.J: 150-52; JKM.S: 122-23.
3. JKM.W.
4. Cœdès 1915 *Ouvrages palis*: 44f; repeated in 1924 *Documents*: 4f.
5. 'Sīhaḷabhikkhus' is JKM's appellation for the Wat Pā Dāng monks, a new school of reformed forest-dwelling or arañña vāsī monks, the first chapter of whom had been re-ordained in Lan kā in 1424.
6. JKM.C: 129-30; JKM.J: 165; JKM.S: 133.
7. This is a condensed translation. JKM.C: 4-5; JKM.J: 185-86; JKM.S: 152-53.
8. The last statement is hypothetical. JKM ends with the year 1527, but it is not known whether Ratanapañña himself or another person continued the chronicle from 1517 to 1527.
9. JKM.W/P: 187; Cœdès 1925 *Documents*: 4.
10. Cœdès 1925 *Documents*: 5. Unlike Jayawickrama and Sāng, who print the colophon at the end of their translation, Cœdès prints it as a footnote in his 'Introduction'.
11. JKM.J: 185.
12. JKM.S: 152.
13. ALI 1.5.1.1 Wat Wisuttha-Ārām 1506; with some errors in Silapākòñ, 17.6, 1973. The ruins of the monastery are still visible in the compound of the school of Bān Huai Bong, about twelve kilometers north of Phayao, west of the road to Chiang Rāi.
14. About one and a half kilometers north of Phayao, on a little elevation called Dòn Chai (< jaya). JKM calls the monastery Vijayavihāra.
15. At least I suppose that the monk went to Chiang Mai, but perhaps the request was made in writing, through the official channels.
16. The inscription spells this part of the name according to the Thai pronunciation, Chayabān [มะ]หาเถรชยบาน ระตะนะปญญา. The name could also be derived, for instance, from Jayapāna "Victory-Drink" (?).
17. Referring to Buddha's victory over Māra.

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