

## CHAPTER 15

# DIFFICULTIES WITH INSCRIPTION NO. 1

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Inscription No. 1, known as the inscription of King Rām Khamhāng (text edition and translation i.a. in: Coedès 1924 *Recueil*; Griswold/Prasöt 1971 *Inscr. Rām Khamhāng*), generally is held to have been written by King Rām Khamhāng of Sukhōthai in 1292 (with the exception of one ((Coedès)) 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 Sukhōthai 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 Sukhōthai and had it brought to Bangkok, together with a stone slab which is now known as the stone throne Phra Thān Manangkha Silā (มณังษีลาบาตร Manang Silā Bāt as it is called in the inscription), and another stone inscription with Khmer letters which is now known as the inscription of Wat Pā Mamuang or Inscription No. 4. Certain ruins to the west of Sukhōthai, outside the town, have been identified as the former Wat Pā Mamuang. But Prince Mongkut is said to have found all three items together on

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the Palace Hill of Sukhōthai, called Nön Prāsāt. 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 Pring Damrong dated 4 August 1939, wrote that inscriptions were rather perplexing; for example, the inscription was a mixture of Rām Khamhāng's own words and those of others, and if everything was so well in Sukhōthai as the inscription says, then what was the use of saying it? (แม้คำที่จารึกก็น่าพิศวง เช่นหลักศิลาครั้งขุนรามคำแหงสังเกตเห็นเป็นคำขุนราม-คำแหงเองก็มี เป็นคำคนอื่นก็มี ปะปนกันอยู่ และถ้าจารึก เมื่อบ้านเมืองดี บอกว่าบ้านเมืองมีอะไรบ้างจะมีประโยชน์อะไร; Narit 1939 Letter 9).

Prince Chand (1976 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 lower age, suggesting that the inscription was written in the time of Phayā Lü Thai (c. 1347-1374). I myself have tried to show that King Rām Khamhāng 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 Kān Thōm Inscriptions; 1985/1988 Jārūk Wat Kān Thōm; 1985 New Evidence; 1986 Thai Scripts). In 1986, Piriya Krairiksh concluded that, for art historical and other reasons, the inscription must have been written after 1400 (Piriya 1986 Silapa dān neramit). In 1987, Vickery, chiefly using linguistic evidence, again concluded against a high age of the inscription and even questioned its authenticity (Vickery 1987 Inscr. Rām Khamhāng). Finally, in August 1988, during a lecture at the Siam Society, Piriya Krairiksh compared certain expressions and passages in the inscription with other Sukhōthai 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 Sukhōthai 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 Sukhōthai origin (Krom Silapākōn 1983, *Jārūk samai sukhōthai* 4-5). On the other hand, the biography of King Mongkut written by his son, the Prince Patriarch Wachirayān, says that Prince Mongkut found the stone throne, Inscription No. 4 and Inscription No. 1 in Sukhōthai (Bradley 1909 *Oldest Siamese Writing* 7; Coedès 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 Sukhōthai; (3) the Jindāmanī 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 Mahāsakkarāja 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 𑂔𑂔) 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 3, lines 10-12).

M.S. 1214 = A.D. 1292

Installation of the stone throne Manang Silā Bāt among the sugar-palm trees. For a different translation, dating the event to 1305-06, see at the end of the chapter. (Face 3, lines 12-13).

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

Excavation of relics and their reenshrinement in Mōng Sī Sachanālai. 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 Rakā "*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 stūpa built over the re-enshrined 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, line 6-7).



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

Completion of an enclosure wall around the Phra Mahā Thāt, probably the stūpa 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 later.

George Coedès is usually credited with having definitely shown that the inscription was written in 1292 with the aim to commemorate or to record the installation of the stone throne Manang Silā Bāt. However, Coedès was not so definite. Many of his readers overlooked the hesitation and prudence with which he expressed himself and interpreted and over-interpreted 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 Rām Khamhāng'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 juste-ment 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. Rām Khamhāng* 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 1917, *Documents* 32); "...la stèle de Rāma K'amhèng 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 (Coedès 1924, *Recueil*), Coedès 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 (Coedès 1964, *Etats*), which contains the already quoted passage, "la stèle de Rāma K'amhèng 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. Coedès 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 for secured: "The stone inscription, which bears the date of 1214 of the old Saka era...equivalent to 1292 A.D. ..." (le 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), Coedès 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 re-enshrinement of the relics in 1285, with the episode of the setting up of the stone throne in 1292, and with a passage in the Yüan history dealing with an embassy from Sukhōthai (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. Coedès 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: Coedès 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/Prasöt, 1971 Inscr. Rām Khamhāng 194.

Six years later, Coedès again explained his reasoning concerning the purpose of the inscription (Coedès 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 Rām Khamhāng 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 Rāma Gāmhēn 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 Coedès 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.

Coedès 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 Rām Khamhāng, 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 Sukhōthai and the Mongol court in 1292, which breaks Coedès' chain of argumentation.

The historical source that Coedès used, as he says himself (1924, *Recueil* 38 and 1964, *Etats* 372), was a passage from the Yüan Shih (in Thai: Yuan Shih) 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 proffered by the chief of the country of Hsien" (Flood 1969, *Sukhothai-Mongol Relations* 223).

Coedès (1917, *Documents* 33) was satisfied that Pelliot had definitely identified Hsien "avec la région de la Haute-Ménam ou royaume de Sukhodaya." Pelliot, on the basis of Ming and Yüan sources, had advanced the following reasoning: According to the sources, 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 Menam (แม่น้ำเจ้าพระยา), and Lo-hou on the lower Menam. Lo-hou was Lop Buri. Hsien must have been the kingdom of Sukhōthai, because it was to the north of Lop Buri, and because Inscription No. 1 attests to Siamese power at Sukhōthai (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 Sukhōthai but referred to some city lower in Thailand and closer to the ocean than Sukhōthai.

The reasoning that Hsien, a hilly and rather barren land, must be north of Lop Burī, is immediately suspect because there is such type of land also in other directions from Lop Burī. For some years now, it has therefore been argued that Hsien should have been somewhere in the delta of the Mā Nām Jao Phrayā, or in southwest central Thailand, or even further down south (i.a. 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, Sukhōthai is northwest of Angkor.

The cultures of Hsien and Sukhōthai 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 an hundred junks 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 junks and raided Tan-ma-hsi (= Tumasik = 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 Sayām 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 (Khian 1966, Folk Art fig. 1; original in U Thong National Museum). Further, the chronicle *Jinakālamālī*, written in 1516-1527, includes the regions of Chiang Mai, Lamphūn and Lampāng in Syāmalesa (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, Sayām 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 Tamnān* 137 n. 81.

Lastly, when the Yüan Shih wants to mention Sukhōthai, 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, *Sukhōthai-Mongol Relations* 226).

Thus, Hsien was not Sukhōthai and the first attested contact between Sukhōthai 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 Silā Bāt*). 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 3rd quarter or at the end of the inscription (Coedès 1924, *Recueil* 38 considers face 4, lines 11-27 a postscript; Griswold/Prasöt 1971 *Inscr. Rām Khamhāng* 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, that it could be 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 a eulogy of King Rām Khamhāng which includes his descendancy, 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 Yün inscription from Lamphūn, c. 1371; text edition and translation in Griswold/Prasöt 1974 *Inscr. Wat Phra Yün*); 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/Prasöt 1972 *King Lödaiya*) which contains one principal eulogy but also praises some other persons, may not have been to record the restoration of the Mahā Thāt in Sukhōtai. Rather, the inscription may have been written on the occasion of, or even after, the restoration of the Mahā Thāt and then was installed at the Mahā Thāt 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, following Sukhōtai's contact with the Mongol court in 1292.

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 สกป้อมโรงพ่นรามาค์แห่ง...ปลูกไม้ตานนี้ได้สิบปีเข้าจึงให้ช่างพนน  
ขุดารหินงุ้งหว่างกลางไม้ตานนี้

Ājān Phithayā Bunnag (Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University) points out to me, and I agree, that the text can be translated in a simple, straight-forward way:

"In A.D. 1292, King Rām Khamhāng...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."

Also, there is corroboration from the stone itself. The same construction with ได้ and จึง occurs on face 4, lines 4-6, on the occasion of the excavation and re-enshrining of the relics in Sī Sachanālai:

1207 สกป้อมโรงพ่น(เอา)พระธาตุออกทงหลายหนักทำบูชาบเรอแก่  
พระธาตุได้เดือนหกวันจึงเอาลงฝังในกลาง(เมื่อ)งขริสขนาไล

"In A.D. 1285 (or 1287, see above), he had relics dug up. Everyone saw them and paid their respects to them. After 1 month and 6 days, they were re-enshrined in the city of Sī Sachanālai."

Bastian, who was in Bangkok in 1863 where he examined old inscriptions and whose understanding of Inscription No. 1 still was somewhat rudimentary, translated: "When the era was dated 1214, in the year of the dragon, the father-benefactor Ramkhamheng...planted a palm tree, and after nineteen (sic!) rice crops had gone by, he ordered the workmen to prepare the smooth surface of a stone, which was fastened and secured in the middle of the trunk of the palm tree" (Bastian 1866, Siamese Inscriptions, in: Griswold/Prasöt 1971, Inscr. Rām Khamhāng 185-186, 224).

But ever since Father Schmitt merged the two main clauses into one clause with a string of subordinate clauses, because he thought that the stone throne was made in 1292, all the other renowned translators of the inscription followed him: Bradley, Coedès, Griswold/Prasöt:



Schmitt: “En caka 1214, année cyclique du grand dragon, le prince Rāma-Khomhëng...fit placer par son architecte un trône de pierre, à l’ombre d’un groupe de palmiers que Sa Majesté avait elle-même plantés, il y a quatorze ans passés.” (In: Griswold/Prasöt 1971 Inscr. Rām Khamhāng 224-225).

Bradley, professor of rhetoric, inserted one subordinate clause in the main clause and translated (his brackets): “In 1214 of the era, year of the Great Dragon, Prince Khun Ram Khamhaeng...[having] planted this grove of palm trees fourteen rice-harvests [before], caused workmen to hew slabs of stone and to set them up in the open space in the center of this palm grove.” (Bradly 1909, *Oldest Siamese Writing* 28, 57).

Coedès: “En 1214, année du dragon, le Prince Rāma Gamhèn...qui avait fait planter ces palmiers à sucre depuis quatorze ans déjà, ordonna à des ouvriers de tailler cette dalle de pierre et de la placer au centre de cette palmeraie.” (Coedès 1924, *Recueil* 47).

Griswold/Prasöt: “In 1214 saka, a year of the dragon, King Rāma Gamhèn...who had planted these sugar-palm trees fourteen years before, commanded his craftsmen to carve a slab of stone and place it in the midst of these sugar-palm trees.” (Griswold/Prasöt 1971, Inscr. Rām Khamhāng 214).

Depending on whether one assumes an imaginary “full stop” before ๑๓ in the inscription text or not, and on which object one places the emphasis, the trees or the stone slab, one is led to favour one or the other of the two possible translations.

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 Rām Khamhāng, perhaps including the “postscripts.”

## The "Mongol Passage"

Coedès saw Mongol influence on Sukhōthai social and political thinking as revealed by Inscription No. 1; he saw a similarity between the structure of Rām Khamhāng's government and that of the Mongol khans (Coedès 1962, *Peuples* 137), and also a similarity in political and filial behaviour (Coedès 1964, *Etats* 358). But while he cautiously formulates his ideas, others who obviously copy from him are less cautious. Coedès "une certaine dose d'inspiration mongole dans la structure sociale" (1962, *Peuples* 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'amhèng...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 Coedès' mind. It is the passage on face 1 where Rām Khamhāng 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 Coedès, 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" (Coedès 1964, *Etats* 358). The Mongol text that Coedès 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 marcherons à 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" (Vladimirtsof 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. Britannica*, 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 Rām Khamhāṅg, knowledge of the Mongol epos certainly was restricted and abroad probably inexistent. Unless there were then unknown close relations between Sukhōthai and the Mongol court, Rām Khamhāṅg 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 Yüan 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 Sukhōthai and one of its former kings, Rām Khamhāṅg.

Thus, Mongol influence on Sukhōthai 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 Jindāmanī Evidence

Jindāmanī (จินดามณี from P. *cintāmaṇi*) 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 Jindāmanī manuscripts, some very different from others.

The usual opinion seems to be that the author of the first Jindāmanī probably was the royal chief astrologer, hōrāthibodī (P.horādhīpati) who may have originated from or may have lived for some time in Sukhōthai and/or Phijit, that he composed the Jindāmanī by order of King Nārāi in 1672, and that he also may have been the author of the so-called Luang Prasöt Chronicle, composed in 1680. That opinion was first forwarded by Prince Damrong in 1932 and was later repeated and somewhat deepened by Thanit Yūphō (see: Silapā Bannākhān 1961 Jindāmanī 146-151). King Nārāi ruled from 1656 to 1688.

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

จินตามณีนี พระโหราธิบดี เดอมอยู่เมืองสุโขทัย แต่งถวาย แต่ครั้งสมเด็จพระนารายณ์เป็นเจ้าลพบุรี

"The chief astrologer who formerly lived in Müang Sukhōthai, composed this Jindāmanī and presented it to King Nārāi, Lord of Lop Buri."

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

Page 16, line

(2) ...ครั้นจุลศักราช 104 ปีชวดศก จึงพระอา

(3) จาริยเจ้าผู้มีปัญญาแต่งจินตามณีถวาย...

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 Nārāi is meant, the date is understood as C.S. 1034 = A.D. 1672.

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

The third note is from the end of one (or several) Usual Jindāmanī manuscript(s) and says in verse form that the learned chief astrologer (โหราประเสริฐ) originally was from Ōkha

Burī (ชาวโหมบุรี) which Prince Damrong and Thanit understood to mean Müang Phijit (Silapā Bannākhān, 1961 Jindāmanī 147-148).

Thanit Yūphō classified the Jindāmanīs into four main groups (Silapā Bannākhān 1961, Jindāmanī 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 Jindāmanīs. Thanit calls this group จินตามณี ฉบับความแปลก “Jindāmanī with strange contents,” or “Unusual Jindāmanī.” 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 จินตามณี ฉบับความพ้อง “Jindāmanī with identical contents” or, somewhat freely but perhaps more to the point, “Jindāmanī with ordinary contents,” “Usual Jindāmanī.” Groups no. 3 and no. 4 consist of only a few items, all 19th century creations, such as Prince Wongsāthirāt’s “Second Volume of Jindāmanī,” composed in 1849 (group no. 3), and Bradley’s Jindāmanī anthology cum dictionary (group no. 4).

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

The oldest known Unusual Jindāmanī 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 and that there is no information on its origin.

Of this manuscript, the late Professor Khajōn Sukhaphānit ขจร สุขพานิช 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 จินตามณี ฉบับพระเจ้าบรมโกศ “Jindāmanī, version of Pra Jao Boroma Kōt”, which was included in a book on the subject of Jindāmanī (Silapā

Bannākhān 1961, Jindāmanī 158 ff). An identical reprint was made in 1969, and a third edition with a slightly different pagination appeared in 1971. King Boroma Kōt of Ayuthayā may have had nothing to do with this Jindāmanī, 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 ๑, 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: หน้าต้น สมุทหนังสือ จินตามณี "Front Page, Book of Jindāmanī."

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

- (1) อันหนึ่งในจดหมายแต่ก่อนว่า ศักกราช 645 มแมศกพรญารอง  
เจ้าได้เมืองศรีสัตนาไลยแล้ว
- (2) (แ)[ต]ง[ห]นึ่งสือไทยแลจได้ว่าแต่งรูปก็ดีแต่งแม่อักษรก็ดีหม  
ได้ว่าไว้แจ้ง อหนึ่งแม่หนังสือแต่ กกา กน
- (3) ฯลฯ ถึงเกอยเมืองขอมก็แต่งมีอยู่แล้ว เหนว่าพรญารองเจ้าจแต่ง  
แต่รูป อักษรไทย

"(An) old document(s) state(s) that in A.D. 1283, after he had obtained Müang Sī Sachanālai, Phayā Ròng devised the Thai writing system (*täng nangsü Thai*). It is not clearly stated whether he devised the form (*täng rūp*) or whether he devised the letters themselves (*täng mǎ aksòn*). (Because) the letter combinations (*mǎ nangsü*) from *kkā*, *kn*, etc. to *keòy* had already been devised in the Khòm country, I think that Phayā Ròng only devised the form of the Thai letters (*täng tà rūp aksòn Thai*)." (Tentative translation).

The remaining two lines on this page consist of a date that is elaborately expressed in Buddhasakkarāja (...พระพุทธศักราชล่วงไปแล้วได้ 2275 พรรษา...) and Culasakkarāja (...จุลศักราชได้ 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: อักษรสูงต่ำต้น คำตรง คือ ขา...

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 Jindāmanī, 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 Jindāmanī manuscripts. At least three among them belong to the category Unusual Jindāmanī. They are catalogued as

|          |     |               |                       |
|----------|-----|---------------|-----------------------|
| จินตามณี | 5;  | formerly: 1/ก | (= JM.NLB/5; my code) |
| จินตามณี | 25; | formerly: 1   | (= JM.NLB/25)         |
| จินตามณี | 93; | formerly: 1/ก | (= JM.NLB/93)         |

All manuscripts are black paper leporello books of a size roughly 12 x 35 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 กรมเลขาธิการคณะรัฐมนตรี.

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) ศักราช 645 ปีมะแมศก พญาร่วงเจ้าได้เมืองศรีสัตนาไล จึงแต่ง
- (2) หนังสือไทแลแม้อักษรทั้งหลายตามปากทั้งปวงอันเจรจาซึ่งกันแลกัน และครั้ง
- (3) นั้นแต่งแต่แม้อักษรไว้ แลจะได้แต่งเปนปรกติธิการนามิได้ แลกลบุตร
- (4) ผู้จะอ่านเขียนเปนอันยากนัก แลอนึ่งแม้นหนังสือแต่กาถึงกน ฯลฯ จนถึงเกษ

Page 2

- (1) เมืองขอมก็แต่งมีอยู่แล้ว พญาร่วงเจ้าจึงแต่งแต่รูปอักษรไทต่างต่าง...

"In A.D. 1283, after he had obtained Müang Sī Sachanālai, Phayā Ruang devised the Thai writing system (*tāng nangsü Thai*) and all the letters (*mä aksòn*) according to the spoken language. It is not clear whether at the time he only devised the letters (*tāng tä mä aksòn*), 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 (*mä nangsü*) from *kkā* to *kn* etc. and on to *key* had already been devised in the Khòm country, Phayā Ruang only devised the form of the various Thai letters (*tāng tä rūp aksòn Thai tāng tāng*)". (Tentative translation).

"Phayā Ròng" in the JM.RAS preface should be the same as "Phayā 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 Ayuthayā period. Phra Wichian Prīchā (Nòi) included one of them in his Phongsāwadān 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 *Phongsāwadān Nūa*, *Phra Jao Arun Rāt* alias *Phayā Ruang* (พระเจ้าอรุณราชคือพระร่วง) lived around B.S. 1000 (A.D. 457), C.S. 119 (A.D. 757). For the purpose of cancelling the *Buddhasakkarāja* (จะลบศักราชพระพุทธเจ้า) he called a conference of the major kings. On that occasion, he ordered to devise the Thai Chiang, Mon, Burmese, Thai, *Khôm Chiang* and *Khôm* letters (พระองค์เจ้าให้ทำหนังสือไทยเจียงมอญพม่าไทยแลขอมเจียงขอมมีมาแต่นั้น; 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* / *Sī Sachanālai* 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 *Pāli* have translations of the king's name such as *Rocarāja* (*Jinakālamālī*); likewise, in the story of the *Phongsāwadān 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* / *Sī Sachanālai*” 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 *Śrī Indrapatindrāditya* or *Indrāditya*, whose title was understood to mean “Lord Sun” or “Lord Light.” In the *Traibhūmikathā*, composed in 1345 (?), the word *āditya* of the title is exchanged for the synonymous *sūrya* and the author *Phayā Lü Thai* is called “grandson of *Phayā Rāmarāja* who belonged to the (King) Sun dynasty” (exordium TBK.KW' 1972.9: หลานเจ้าพระญารามราชผู้เป็นสุริยวงศ์; colophon TBK.KW' 1972.326: หลานแก่พระรามราชอันเป็นสุริยวงศ์). In later times, the *Traibhūmikathā* was known simply as *Trai Phūm 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 Phayā 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 Phayā Ruang is also mentioned in Inscription No. 1 for the devising of Thai letters by King Rām Khamhāng. 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):

พูนรามคำแหงหาใครใจในใจแลไศลายสีโทนัลายสีโทนัจึงมีเพื่อขุนผู้ ننไนไศไว

“Phò Khun Rām Khamhāng had the deep wish to fix (the shape of?) these Thai letters (*sai lāi sū Thai nī*). 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: Sī Sachanālai/Sukhōthai; person involved: Phayā Ruang/Phò Khun Rām Khamhāng; no technical details concerning the letters.

The transfer of name and place, Rām Khamhāng > Ruang, and Sukhōthai > Sī Sachanālai, is another example of the change that past events underwent in later writings: a specific monarch in Sukhōthai becomes an anonymous Phayā Ruang of Sī Sachanālai 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, Phayā Ruang (Ròng) had devised a Thai writing system in 1283 after he had obtained Sī Sachanālai; 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 “Khôm 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 Rām Khamhāng 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 Jindāmanī points to a date in plain Sukhōthai 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 Rām Khamhāng, perhaps written some years after the installation of the stone seat Manang Silā Bāt which was of religious and secular importance.

I am aware of the fragility of much that has been advanced in this paper. Many conclusions were arrived at only by weighing probabilities and by judging from appearances. It is there-

fore 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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