

"Some New Evidence for the Cultural History of Central Thailand", *The Siam Society's Newsletter*, Volume 2, Number 3 (September 1986), 4-6.

Over the past few years there has been increasing awareness in scholarly circles of the significance of the Mon, their language, and their culture in the early history of Thailand. Whether in Art History, Economic History, or Linguistics new publications have clearly indicated the importance of the Mon.¹

In an earlier publication I indicated that a few terms found in historical records of Thailand and which had mystified earlier students were probably Mon.² In particular, some of the first Europeans to visit Ayutthaya, as the Portuguese Fernão Mendes Pinto reported, found that Wats were called 'Quiai', that is *kyāk*, the Mon term.

Another such term from Pinto's *Peregrinations*, in a section on travels through the Burma-Thailand borderlands, is *calaminham*, which Pinto glossed as 'Seigneur du Monde', with *cala* meaning 'seigneur' and *minham* 'monde'.³ On the first term Pinto was certainly correct. *Cala*, written *kala* by modern linguists, is a Middle Mon development from *trala*, 'lord', 'master', 'owner'; and Pinto's writing attests the development at an earlier date than Mon specialists hitherto believed. The full term 'Calaminham', probably represented *kala* + *mbuiwña*, *muiwña* (Mohnyin).⁴

1. In Art History see Piriya Krairiksh, (*History of Art in Thailand, A Student Handbook*) Bangkok, 2528; In Economic-Geographic History see Dhida Saraya, "Si Thep was Sricanasa" [Thai text], *Muang Boran*, Vol 11, No 1, January-March 1985, pp. 63-75; In Linguistics see Gérard Diffloth, *The Dvaravati Old Mon Language and Nyah Kur, Monic Language Studies* Vol. 1, Chulalongkorn University 1984; and Theraphan L. Thongkum, *Nyah Kur (Chao Bon)-Thai-English Dictionary*, Monic Language Studies, Vol. 2, Chulalongkorn University 1984.

2. Michael Vickery, Review of H.L. Shorto, *A Dictionary of the Mon Inscriptions from the Sixth to the Sixteenth Centuries*, Oxford University Press, 1971 (cited further as *DOMI*), *Journal of the Siam Society* 61/2 (July 1973), pp. 205-209.

3. Pinto, p. 606.

4. H.L. Shorto, *DOMI*, 172. This identification was made years ago by Dr. Joaquim de Campos, "Early Portuguese Accounts of Thailand", *Journal of the Thailand Research Society* 32/1 (September 1940), pp. 1-28, see p. 20. De Campos also identified *minham* as Thai *müang*, which is less certain, and said Pinto was recounting a trip to Luang Prabang. Dr. Christian Bauer, a linguist specializing in Mon, informs me that *kala* < *trala* had not

Closer to home, a term in a Sukhothai inscription which has plagued several generations of Sukhothai scholars may now be confidently identified as Mon. In Inscription no. 38, line 15, is the phrase *lūk khun mun tvān*, indicating grades of officials. *tvān* has usually been identified as Malay *tuan*, 'master', without regard for the plausibility of a Malay term in the Sukhothai hierarchy at that time;⁵ but *tvān* is in fact Mon for 'village'.⁶

As historical and archaeological study of the Sukhothai-Sri Satchanalai area develops there is increasing reason to think of possible Mon connections.

Thus the earliest identifiable type of local pottery in the Ban Koh Noi kiln fields 5 km north of the old city now known as Sri Satchanalai has traditionally been called 'Mon' by local villagers, who themselves have been Thai for generations, if not centuries. Since the term 'mon' there has been handed down from one generation to the next, not brought in by scholars from outside, it suggests that there were formerly Mon potters who worked those kilns. Mon potters on the river Yom should not astonish, since there is epigraphic evidence of a Mon population in Lophburi and Lamphun between the 7th and 13th centuries; and Mon pottery villages still exist along the lower Menam Chao Phraya.⁷

Taking such a Mon-centric view may permit explanation of some elusive terms connected with pottery in Sukhothai-Sri Satchanalai.

The only certain reference in the Sukhothai inscriptions to the old pottery industry is in Inscription no. 2, face 2, line 54, in the account of a marvelous relic which flew through the air emitting a radiance ดั่งสูงเพาหมอ

been attested in Mon records as early as mid-16th century. This demonstrates the importance of further study of Pinto's work, which will probably reveal a Mon origin for other so far unidentified terms. For Mohnyin see *DOMI*, p. 302, and Michael Vickery, review of *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*, edited and translated by Rebecca D. Catz. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989, in *Asian Studies Review* (Asian Studies Association of Australia), Vol. 14, No. 3 (April 1991), pp. 251-53.

⁵. A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, "A Law Promulgated by the King of Ayudhya in 1397 A.D.", Epigraphical and Historical Studies no. 4, *Journal of the Siam Society* 57/1 (January 1969), pp. 109-148, see p. 131, n. 24.

⁶. Shorto, *DOMI*, 178. This was first noted by Barend Jan Terwiel, "Ahom and the Study of Early Thai Society", *JSS* 71/1-2 (1983), pp. 42-62; see p. 47.

⁷. For example at Koh Kret, Nonthaburi.

เผาไฟ (in 14th-century orthography) *tǎn suñ phau hmo phau hai*, "like *suñ* firing pots and jars".⁸

Earlier scholars had simply translated *suñ* as 'flame' or 'fire', without resolving the difficulty of the lack of such a word for 'fire' in all known Thai languages, even in distant relatives of standard modern Thai.⁹

The new version of Inscription no. 2 has 'solved' the problem by emending *suñ* to *sum*, 'bonfire',¹⁰ which would be legitimate if (1) linguistic comparison showed *ñ* and *m* in alternation at the end of Thai words, or (2) if the characters for *ñ* and *m* in 14th-century script were of sufficient similarity to be confused in writing or reading. Neither of these conditions prevails. The sounds /ŋ/ and /m/ do not alternate; and the two characters were quite distinct in the 14th century as they are now.¹¹ *Sum* 'bonfire' as an interpretation of *suñ* in Inscription no. 2 does not hold up on linguistic grounds.

It would be weak on cultural grounds, even if there were some evidence for *suñ* = *sum*. In the 14th century the pottery industry of Sukhothai and Sri Satchanalai was highly developed, and its famous pots and jars had already for centuries been fired in kilns, not bonfires, a

⁸. The latest study of Inscription no. 2, which I follow here, is that published in *Silācārīk sukhodai hlak 2 (cārīk vat śrī jum)*, Edition from seminars in B.E. 2520, 2522, and 2523, Bangkok, The National Library, B.E. 2527 (cited further as *Hlak 2*), and in *Silā cārū'k Sukhodai*, published by the Fine Arts Department for the 700th anniversary of Thai writing, 2526. The passage is on p. 35 of *Hlak 2*. The current controversy over the location of the incident described in Inscription 2 is irrelevant to the interpretation offered here, for the simile was directed at a Sri Sajjanalai-Sukhothai audience, wherever the event had taken place. Unfortunately *Hlak 2* has provided far too little scholarly apparatus to justify the often startling new readings proposed, and it is thus of little use as a tool for further scholarly work.

⁹. George Coedès, ed., *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam*, Première partie, Inscriptions de Sukhodaya, Bangkok 1924, p. 72; A. B. Griswold and Prasert ṅa Nagara, "Epigraphic and Historical Studies" no. 10, *Journal of the Siam Society* 60/1 (1972), p. 130. For convincing evidence that there is no Thai, or related-language, word like *suñ* for 'fire', see Fang Kuei-Li, "The Tai and the Kam-Sui Languages", *Lingua* 14 (1965), pp. 148-179, no. 151 in his vocabulary list, with 'fire' ranging from *wi*, *vi*, *vui*, *v i*, and *wii* in Kam-Sui languages to *fai* in Siamese and *fii* in the Northern group of Tai languages spoken in China.

¹⁰. *Hlak 2*, pp. 35, 48, note 126.

¹¹. See Marvin Brown, *From Ancient Thai to Modern Dialects*, p. 26, for the question of *ñ/m* alternation; and the table of scripts in *Hlak 2*, pp. 73-75 for the 14th-century written forms of *ñ* and *m*.

procedure used to make crude, and rather weak, utility wares. Neither would the type of bonfire used in ceramic production have produced the intense light mentioned in Inscription 2, but which does come from a kiln chimney during firing. Whoever wrote Inscription 2 must have been thinking 'kiln' when writing *suñ*.¹²

The solution is found in Mon. In Old Mon *sruiñ* was 'hole in the ground'; and the first kilns, the 'bank kiln' type, were specialized holes dug into the ground. The word became *sruinñ*, *suiñ*, in Literary Mon, and *sañ* in modern spoken Mon. Another form without the *r* is *cuñ/chuñ* of Mon-related Nyah Kur, a language in which *c/ch* regularly corresponds to Mon *s*. Furthermore, in modern Mon a word for 'kiln', *kok*, has in some places been combined with *sañ* in another term for 'kiln', *sañkok*. Thus 14th-century Sukhothai *suñ*, must have been borrowed from Mon *sruiñ*, and used for 'kiln' in Thai, probably because the pottery industry had been founded by Mons who left their technical terms attached to the process.¹³

One more mysterious pottery-related expression in Sri Satchanalai may also be explained through Mon. Locally, since time immemorial, the kiln fields of Ban Koh Noi have been called *tau durian* (/thuriang/); and various implausible hypotheses have been put forward to derive 'thuriang' from Chinese, based on the idea that Phra Ruang went to China and returned with potters, something increasingly in doubt.¹⁴

Old Mon had a word *dulāñ, dulāñ*, 'saucer, dish', the second vowel of which not being found in Thai would be transformed into the nearest native Thai vowel if borrowed; and the Thai initial consonant corresponds to old /d/. Since Mon *dulāñ/ dulāñ* would have become /həleang/ at a later stage of

12. The information on kilns and firing here is from the work of Mr. Don Hein of the Thai Ceramics Archaeological Project. See in particular Don Hein, Peter Burns, Dick Richards, "Sawankhalok Export Kilns--Evolution and Development", mimeographed undated, and Don Hein, "Field Report on the Excavation of Kiln 42, Ban Ko Noi, Sisatchanalai, Thailand, 1984/85-Part A", mimeographed September 1985. The assumption of a break between the ancient and modern Mon populations of Central Thailand needs to be reexamined.

13. See Shorto, *DOMI*, p.397; Shorto, *Dictionary of Spoken Mon*, pp. 63, 76, 192; Diffloth, *Dvaravati Old Mon*, p. 133. The term *sañkok* for 'kiln' came from an old Mon potter in Koh Kret, Nonthaburi, interviewed in April 1986.

14. For an illustration see Sanur Niladej, "Sangkhalok Wares" [Thai text], *Muang Boran* XII/2 (April-June 1986), pp. 18-31, see p. 22.

the language, the Thai borrowing dates from the time the kiln fields were active.¹⁵

Still another puzzling term, which interpreters of Inscription no. 2 have failed to elucidate, may perhaps also be explained through Mon. On Face 2, line 39 speaks of a "tall large chedi with 500 jataka carved around it very beautifully", the last part of the passage reading in Thai, หารอยชาติติรเทศงาม พิลิ(ตร)หนก (หนา) *hā roy jāti tirdes nām bicitr hnakk hnā*, and containing the term *tirdes*, which has no meaning in Thai. The editors of *Hlak 2* failed to offer an explanatory footnote as they did for other unusual terms, Coedès gave up, while Griswold and Prasert speculated on a Pali origin. Probably it is the Old Mon *dirdas*, glossed by Shorto as "(Human) existence, incarnation, coming into e[xistence], birth", and serving in Inscription 2 as a doublet for *jāti*.¹⁶

Having established this much, it is worth going on to something more speculative, the name 'Sawankhaloke'/*svarggaloka*.

According to tradition, this name was established sometime in the Ayutthaya period in replacement for the earlier Sri Sajjanalaya and Chaliang. In fact on 17th-century European maps of Thailand the name Sanquelok/Sankhalok appears, and is conventionally explained, as a popular corruption of the correct 'sawankhalok'. This is an assumption, however, and in the absence of any pre-17th century contemporary record of *svarggaloka/sawankhalok*, it is equally legitimate to ask whether modern 'sawankhalok' is nothing more than a hyper-correction of the earlier 'sankhalok', which itself originated from something quite different from *svarggaloka*. Certainly some early 19th-century court officials had not yet made the assumption 'sankhalok' < *svarggaloka*, for on the base of Buddha images brought to Bangkok from the north at that time one finds the inscribed notation, "sangalok/sangkhalok".¹⁷

¹⁵. See Shorto, *DOMI*, p. 197; apparently *dulān* is attested only in a 12th-century inscription. The information on the word's later development, if it continued to be used, and on the quality of Mon vowels, is from Dr. Christian Bauer.

¹⁶. *Hlak 2*, p. 32; Coedès, op. cit., p. 71, n. 2; Griswold and Prasert, *EHS* 10, p. 125, n. 143. Shorto, *DOMI*, p. 193.

¹⁷. *Caru'k samay Sukhodai*, published by the Fine Arts Department for the 700th Anniversary of Thai writing, 2526, p. 135. Without prejudging the issue by reference to the modern name, 'sankhalok' suggests a connection with the Mon *saṅkok*, 'kiln', not unexpected given the large ancient ceramic industry around the old city of Sri Sajjanalai. As the terms stand it is only a possible connection, not an identity. Sankhalok is not

[*New material added 2012. This article was written and published before I had discovered the chronicle fragment *2/k.125* describing 15th-century events,¹⁸ but the age of which seems impossible to determine beyond the probability that it is from the Ayutthaya period¹⁹. Lacunae at several points show that the contents did not originate with the manuscript at hand, which must in turn be a copy of an older one.

With respect to the argument of the present paper, the *2/k.125* fragment makes Bañā Jalian the most important chief in the Sukhothai region, and besides his own *mo'an Jalian* seems to give him authority over *mo'an Savarrgalok* as well, using this spelling which I have proposed above as perhaps a 17th-century development, at which time, in fact the extant text of *2/k.125* could have been written, bringing some terms up to date, even if its basic story is from the 15th century. Thus, when the king of Ayutthaya called the chiefs of the northern *mo'an* to Ayutthaya, “Bañā Jalian left *mo'an Savarrgalok* [to] Cau Rāj Śrī Yaś, who was his son”; and when they left Ayutthaya to return home “Bañā Jalian, when he had reached *mo'an Savarrgalok*, he left all affairs to Hmu'n Hluon Bal...” while he became involved with the affairs of Nan and Chiang Mai. ‘Satchanalai’, however written, does not appear in *2/k.125**]

sankok, and we must suspect a very early hyper-correction, or another name based on Mon *san* < *sun*.

¹⁸ “The *2/k.125* Fragment, a Lost Chronicle of Ayutthaya”, in this volume pp 00-00.

¹⁹ Conversation with Khun Prasarn Bunprakong, June 1975, which concurs with the opinion of Khun Bunnag. In a conversation Dr. Prasert na Nagara has said that the epigraphy of the Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods has been too little studied to permit a definite statement about the date of the script.