

"From Lamphun to Inscription No. 2", *The Siam Society Newsletter*, 3/1 (March 1987), pp. 2-6.

Summary of talk given at the Siam Society on 14 October 1986.

Some years ago Dr. Prasert ṅa Nagar discovered that *mai han akat* was not found in dated Sukhothai inscriptions before 1361, and he therefore proposed that the presence or absence of the sign could determine the relative date of undated inscriptions pre- or post-1361, a view which he has maintained in his most recent publication.<sup>1</sup>

This view has recently been challenged by Dr. Hans Penth, in relation to his work on the group of inscriptions found incised together with Buddha images on gold plates covering the 'dome' of the main stupa of Wat Haripunchai in Lamphun. His thoughts on these inscriptions have evolved through at least four publications, and seem to have crystallized as follows: the letters are of the Sukhothai type, and the closest resemblance elsewhere seems to be the Jataka inscriptions now at Wat Si Chum, which probably date from 1330 or earlier. The Lamphun inscriptions use both *mai han akat* or double consonants to indicate short /a/. Before 1400, the choice between *mai han akat* or double consonants seems to have been a matter of personal preference on the part of the scribe, for the Jataka inscriptions and Sukhothai inscription no. 2, dated to around 1345 A.D. use both, just like the four Lamphun inscriptions.<sup>2</sup>

According to Dr. Penth, Old Khmer and Mon had two ways to indicate that the short /a/ which is never written but automatically follows or is inherent to a consonant letter, was not to be pronounced: They either traced a more or less horizontal stroke (*virāma*) over the consonant of which the short /a/ was to be silent, or they wrote that consonant twice; and it seems that the *virāma* method was the older one, the consonant reduplication method a younger innovation, and that the Khmer, but not the Mon, eventually ceased to use the *virāma*. [The function of the *virāma*, it must be emphasized, was to suppress a syllable-final vowel.]

The Thai must have known both, Dr. Penth said, and, it would have been logical to take over both. "Consonant reduplication may have been fashionable for Khmer script at the time, the Sukhothai scribes...can be expected to have followed the trend and to have used consonant reduplication more often than *virāma*...the Thai scribes to the north may have favored the *virāma*". [As we shall see, the last remark is belied by the facts.]

It is true that the *virāma*, as such, to suppress the final vowel, is older than the doubling of consonants to indicate short /a/, but it is entirely another matter to say that

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1. See his Results of Research in Thai History, (*phonngan khon khwa pravatsat Thai*) 1971, pp. 48,50; *Saratthakhadi Prasert ṅa Nagar*, 1984, pp. 65-68.

2. These are his *Lan Na History (Prawat khwām pen mā...)*; "Inscriptions and Images on the Phra Maha That in Lamphun", a paper given at the International Conference on Thai Studies, Bangkok, 22-24 August 1984; *Siam Society Newsletter* I/3, 1985; and "*Mai han akat*", *Journal of the Siam Society*, 73 (parts 1-2), January and July 1985, pp. 176-82. This date for inscription no. 2 is from A.B. Griswold and Prasert ṅa Nagara, "Epigraphic and Historical Studies", no. 10, 1972, p. 75; note the difference from Dr. Prasert's views cited above.

the adaptation of *virāma* as *mai han akat* is older than consonantal doubling for the same purpose in the total absence of any text in support.

Khmer stopped using the *virāma* sometime between Angkor and the modern period. In the Angkor period they sometimes used double final consonants as substitute for *virāma*, with any vowel, not just /a/, but not consistently nor continuously. The so-called modern inscriptions of Angkor Wat dated 15th-18th centuries show the modern convention of marking short /a/ with the long /a/ vowel sign and a superimposed 'killer' sign. There is almost no corpus of inscriptions in Cambodia between the early 13th century and the end of the 15th, thus the most important Khmer text for that period is Lidaiy's of 1361 in Sukhothai (Inscription no. 4), where we can see precisely what type of Khmer was known to Sukhothai scribes and might have influenced Thai writing. That text shows neither *virāma* nor double consonants. It has the modern convention of closed final consonant, and the old pre-Angkor and Angkor convention of inherent short /a/ in the consonant symbols. It would seem that Sukhothai learned neither *mai han akat* nor final double consonants from the Khmer.

Mon has continued to use *virāma* up to the present. The only exception was Haripunchai Mon around the 13th century which used double final consonant in place of *virāma*, but not exclusively for short /a/, and most frequently doubled liquids and sibilants which are not the consonants usually found doubled in Thai.<sup>3</sup>

Thus Dr. Penth's argument about *mai han akat* does not hold up paleographically, and we must still agree that Dr. Prasert seems to be correct in his interpretation of the temporal significance of *mai han akat*.

The analysis of *mai han akat* may be further refined, beyond the mere recognition of its presence or absence at dates before or after 1361.

It appears that in Sukhothai there were at least 3 clear stages in the development of *mai han akat*: (1) only for final  $\dot{n}, \dot{n}, \sim -\dot{a}$ , tentatively, along with  $\dot{n}\dot{n}$ ,  $\dot{a}\dot{a}$ , and sometimes final  $n, \sim -\dot{u}$ ; (2) for  $\dot{n}, \sim -\dot{a}$ , together with  $\dot{n}\dot{n}$ ,  $-\dot{a}\dot{a}$ , and also replacing other final doubled consonants, such as stops ( $p, k, t$ ); (3) generalized *mai han akat*, increasingly complete to the exclusion of final doubled consonants.

This can be traced through the dated inscriptions numbers 3 (1357), 5 (1361), 8 (1359/1369), a gold plate of 1376, 102 (1379), 45 (1392), 93 (1399), 49 (1412), a Buddha image base dated 1421, 13 (1510). *Mai han akat* first appears in 1361 on final nasals; final stops are generally doubled until 1379, and by the end of the 14th century *mai han akat* is found with all final consonants. Some doubling still occurred as late as the early 16th century.

We should also note no. 62 (1369), from Lamphun, which although in Sukhothai script, does not show the same evolution of the *mai han akat* convention. It has no *mai han akat*, and all short /a/ are indicated by doubled final consonants, [contrary to Penth's assertion above about "Thai scribes to the North". It must be realized that although the monk Sumana who inspired no. 62 was said to have been from Sukhothai, the inscription must be considered an example of Lanna writing].

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<sup>3</sup>. I owe all information on Mon to Dr. Christian Bauer of the Department of Linguistics, Mahidol University, Salaya.

This evolution in Sukhothai script suggests that the origin of *mai han akat* was not from the *virāma*, at least not directly. Since *mai han akat* began, not to indicate short /a/ in general (which is in fact opposite to the function of the *virāma* to suppress a vowel), but short /a/ preceding *ṅ*, it more likely derived from the Thai-language-Khmer script convention of using an identical sign as **substitute** for the syllable *-ṅṅ* (ᨾᨿ). A Sukhothai example is Inscription no. 9, its three parts containing dates 1340-1428. In it the words *saṅgharāja* (line 2), *saṅgh* (line 22, 24), *danhlāy* (line 26), *sansakār* (line 29), *vans* and *bans* (face 3, lines 13-14) are written with a sign identical to *mai han akat* replacing the consonant *ṅ* (ᨾ). This convention only affected certain words, mainly Indic, plus the expression *danhlāy*, and a true *mai han akat* plus *ṅ* is also found in the Thai word *tṅṅ* (ᨾᨿ). For all other cases of short /a/ no. 9 shows doubled final consonants with the second written as subscript. Of course certain proof of the above hypothesis requires an earlier text.

We may also perhaps date other inscriptions more precisely, depending on just how they use *mai han akat*. No. 2 uses it very rarely, and only for *-ṅṅ*, together with *-ṅṅ*, and this fits very well with Dr. Prasert's dating of it to 1359-1361. Presumably he and Griswold have now rejected the 1345 date for Inscription 2 which was proposed in their *EHS* 10, p. 75.

The jataka plates of Wat Sri Chum, together with *attv* in Bodhisatva, *hvva*, *tvva*, and frequent *ann*, *-khann-*, also have *mai han akat* in *sṅṅ*, *ṅṅ*, *kṅṅ*, *nṅṅ*, *-vṅṅ-*, *mṅṅ*, *lṅṅ*, *mṅṅ*, *yṅṅkh*, *kṅṅ-*, *sṅṅ*. These characteristics are comparable to Sukhothai inscriptions dated between 1379 and 1412. The jataka also contain the letter *ḷ cula* (ᨾ), not used otherwise in Sukhothai until 1399 (Inscription 93). Paleographically, then the jataka plaque inscriptions should be dated to around the end of the 14th century.

Among the four Lamphun inscriptions one contains *mai han akat* in the syllables *ṅṅ*, *dṅṅ*, *tṅṅ*, *cṅṅ*, *-bṅṅ*; that of Sumethangkon (very lightly scratched on the surface), has *ann*, *stapp*, *fṅṅ*, *dṅṅ*; that of a Mahāthevī, mother of two *brañā*, has no *mai han akat*, but exclusively doubled final consonants to indicate short /a/; and the fourth has no words with diagnostic short /a/. The four inscriptions are written according to different conventions, and it may not be correct to ascribe them to the same date.

If they were written according to Sukhothai conventions, the mixture of *mai han akat* with /a/ plus doubled final consonants would indicate the transitional period in the latter half of the 14th century. We see, however, that style may have been different in Lamphun, where the 1369 inscription did not use *mai han akat*, and they may thus be even later. The absence of *mai han akat* in Lamphun does not have to mean pre-1361; but the presence of *mai han akat* should mean post-1361, probably much later.

Having denied the objective evidence of *mai han akat*, Dr. Penth went on to date the Lamphun inscriptions by their content. One of the inscriptions refers to a *mahāthevī* mother of two rulers who were brothers. Dr. Penth says "the two kings

mentioned should have been Phaya Sän Phu of Lan Na and Phaya Nam Thuam, Lord of Chiang Tung."<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the dates of the inscriptions, those identities for the princes are dubious.

In three *JSS* articles I demonstrated the very strong evidence that Jaya Saṅgrām, Saen Phū, and Nam Thuam are fictitious, and that the only reliable 14th-century king list is that of Wat Phra Yün: *brañā maññray hlvañ*, *brañā gām fū*, *brañā phāyu*, *cau dāv soñ saen nā ann dharmikarāj*, the last reigning in 1369 and equivalent to the chronicles' Kūna/Kilana. The argument is that the chronicles have inserted two fictitious generations, demonstrated even in the best versions by impossible squeezing of birth years and ages, while Nam Thuom belongs to a legend found in both Chiang Mai and Sukhothai sources.<sup>5</sup>

I maintain my conclusions, and do not believe that the Lamphun inscriptions can be dated by reference to that pair of brothers.

The identity of the persons named in the Lamphun inscriptions may be impossible to determine, at least the identities will depend on the date of the inscriptions being determined by other evidence. There must have been in each generation a *mahāthevī* with several sons, at least two of whom were ranked as *brañā*. Several northern inscriptions (nos. 65, 67, 68, 71, 73, 99, 100, 101, 104) demonstrate the prominence of a Mahāthevī, certainly not all the same person, during 1466-1556. Thus that title alone cannot determine the date of any text. More significant is the evidence of these dated inscriptions that in 1489 a Mahārājthevī donated *thong sako*, the material of which the controversial Buddha reliefs are made. In the same year she had a certain Sumedha set up a Buddha image in another wat, and in 1500 the king and his mother donated, among other things, a golden buddha to the Phra That. The content of the inscriptions on the dome thus suggests a date toward the end of the 15th century.

Besides the inscriptions, of course, is the evidence of the relief images themselves, which have been **assumed**, I emphasize, to be coeval with the inscriptions.

Dr. Piriya Krairksh has discussed the images in three publications.<sup>6</sup> In all three contexts he stated that the closest comparable work to the Lamphun images was the jataka slabs at Wat Sri Chum; and that this should give a clue to dating the former. He also established that the Lamphun images are not in their original location; and that they were placed on the dome during some reconstruction of the temple and placed unsystematically, almost at random, in the place where they are now found.

4. *Siam Society Newsletter*, p. 6.

5. "Lion Prince", *JSS* 64/1, Jan 1976, pp. 371-376); the discussion of the fictitious character of Nam Thuam and Jay Sangram was continued in "Guide Through Some Recent Sukhothai Historiography", *JSS* 66/2, July 1978, pp.199- 202; and the whole matter was once more discussed, with additional evidence in "Postscript II" to "A New Tamnan About Ayudhya", *JSS* 67/2, July 1979, pp. 179-182.

6. In "The earliest Datable Buddha Images of Lan Na Thai", a paper presented to the International Thai Studies Conference in August 1984; "New Evidence from Lan Na concerning the Development of early Thai Letters and Buddha Images", in the *Siam Society Newsletter* I/3 of 1985; and in *Müang Boran*, vol. 12, no. 1, January-March 1986.

For dating Dr. Piriya relied on the then current view that Sukhothai Inscription no. 2 belonged to the 1340s, and that the jataka images mentioned there were the ones at Wat Sri Chum. Thus the Lamphun images should be of the same date.

There is no objection to dating the images of Lamphun to the same period as the jataka plaques, if art historians are in agreement, but now the date for both must be redefined. Certain features of the script of the jatakas situate them toward the end of the 14th century, and if contemporaneity of jatakas, Lamphun buddhas, and inscriptions associated with both is maintained, the Lamphun inscriptions too must be placed no earlier than the turn of the 14-15 centuries.

Both Dr. Piriya and Dr. Penth have assumed that the images and the inscriptions date from the same period.

The inscriptions, however, are placed awkwardly within narrow bands between the legs of the figures and the edges of their respective plates, in such a way that many lines are extremely short, and frequently the final letter of the last word of a line had to be placed in isolation in the next line. The same sort of logic which induced Dr. Piriya to conclude that the images were not made originally for their place on the dome suggests that the images may not have been designed to include the inscriptions, which were added later at the time the images were moved to their present site. Indeed the quite different style of writing of one inscription suggests that the inscriptions, like the placement of the images, were not part of a well-conceived plan, but added *ad hoc*, perhaps the anomalous one scratched on after the images had been placed on the dome, while the others were done on the ground.<sup>7</sup>

Parts of both Dr. Penth's and Dr. Piriya's arguments depended on the view that Sukhothai inscription no. 2 dated from the 1340s, and that the jataka images mentioned in it are those at Wat Sri Chum. But as I have shown, in agreement with Dr. Prasert's opinion, its use of *mai han akat* places it around 1361. Moreover the latest consensus of Thai scholars studying inscription 2 is that the section in which the jatakas are mentioned does not even relate to what is now Thailand, as I wrote some years ago, following the argument of A.B. Griswold and Dr. Prasert.<sup>8</sup>

The dating of inscription 2 has always been made on the basis of several assumptions, which require examination.

First is the assumption, starting with Coedès among modern scholars, that inscription 2 was concerned with the foundation of the Mahathat at Sukhothai; although such an identification in itself does not reveal a date.

Then, in the work of Griswold and Dr. Prasert, the reasoning is that *Jinakālamālī* and *Mūlasāsana* say that a king 'Dharmaraja' of Sukhothai requested Sihlabhikkus from Martaban at a date supposed to be around 1341; and the protagonist of inscription 2, Sri Sraddha, must have returned after that date, since being a Sihlabhikku himself the request would have been unnecessary if he were already in Sukhothai.<sup>9</sup>

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7. I wish to thank Dr. Hans Penth for permitting me to examine his photographs and transcriptions of the inscriptions, and Dr. Piriya Krairksh for very helpful discussion of these questions.

8. "Guide Through Some Recent Sukhothai Historiography".

9. A.B. Griswold, *Towards A History of Sukhothai Art*; Griswold and Prasert, EHS 10.

In an earlier article I discussed this matter in some detail.<sup>10</sup> There I emphasized that the dates read into *Mulasasana* and *Jinakalamali* for the activities of Sumana and Anomadassi, sent to reside respectively in the Mango Grove Monastery of Sukhothai and the Red Forest Monastery in Sajjanalay, are in contradiction with epigraphic evidence (inscriptions 4,5,9) that those two monasteries were only established in 1361 and 1359. Moreover the context of *Jinakalamali* places Sumana's activities between 1355 and 1369, which means that the two rulers of Sukhothai and Sri Sajjanalay, there named 'Dhammaraja' and his son 'Lideyyaraja', could only have been respectively Lidayi and one of his sons, whom I preferred to identify as Mahadharmaraja II, and whom G/P finally said (EHS 12, p. 119, might have been one of Lidayi's sons, "perhaps the 'Father Lödayi'" of inscription 45. The precise identity is not now under discussion, only the date. The request for Sihlabhikkus was thus from Lidayi, not Lödayi.

Once it is established that the stories of arrival of Sinhalese buddhism should be placed in the 1350s-1360s, others details fall into place.

In EHS 10, p.74, Griswold and Prasert wrote that Lödayi's supposed request "for a qualified Sihlabikkhu...must have been made before Srisraddha's return to Sukhodaya, for if he were already there it would have been unnecessary." Now the same logic would apply to Lidayi's request around 1360 for a Sangharaja; if Srisraddha was already there, as all agree he was, and still active until 1376, as Griswold and Prasert wrote in their EHS 10, pp. 145-8, then why invite another Sihala Sangharaja?

The implication of this reasoning and of inscriptions 9,4,5 is that Sri Sraddha, the protagonist and probable author of inscription no. 2, returned in 1361 along with the Mahasami Sangharaja whom Lidayi invited. In fact Sri Sraddha may have even been that Sangharaja; and inscription no. 2 is the account of his activities up to his return around 1361, and it tells us nothing about the Mahathat at Sukhothai nor the Jataka carvings at Wat Sri Chum.

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<sup>10</sup>. "Guide Through Some Recent Sukhothai Historiography", pp. 213-214 .