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A PROBLEMATIC INSCRIPTION (K. 1237) *

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The inventory of Cambodian inscriptions maintained since more than a century by the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO) now counts more than 1300 inscriptions each assigned a “K. number” which are tabulated in George Cœdès’ *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (IC), vol. VIII, in the supplement published by Jacques (1971) and in the updated inventory prepared by the project *Corpus des inscriptions khmères* (CIK).¹

The earliest and latest dated entries date respectively from 598 and 1747 CE (cf. Billard & Eade 2006). Inscriptions pertaining to the Khmer corpus have been recovered from hundreds of sites in the vast area whose extremities are marked by the Mekong delta in Vietnam; the Vat Phu monument in Laos; Phimai in Thailand; and Chaiya in the Thai part of the Malay peninsula. However, only a small number of Cambodian inscriptions have found their way to publicly accessible collections in the West. In Europe, we are aware of one Khmer inscription in the Script Museum of the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands (K. 1116); in France, the total number of relevant pieces held at the Musée Guimet, according to IC VIII, p. 246, is fourteen — a number that is perhaps not as substantial as one might, for obvious historical reasons, have expected; a stela of the time of Tribhuvanādityavarman (K. 1297) is held in a private collection near Paris and being prepared for publication. We are aware of several inscribed artefacts held in Japan, but all in private collections (see Griffiths & Vincent 2014: 123 and 127, on K. 1328, and pers. comm. from Brice

* This article is based on Arlo Griffiths’ presentation at the 2010 annual meeting of the American Oriental Society. Earlier drafts of it were submitted to the critical eyes of Dominic Goodall, Philip N. Jenner†, Dominique Soutif and Michael Vickery†. We are grateful for the improvements they have suggested. We also express also our sincere thanks to Hun Chhuenteng, Van Vy and Chea Socheat for their suggestions regarding the Khmer portion of the inscription.

¹ This international project, executed under the joint aegis of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* and the EFEO, launched by Gerdi Gerschheimer and currently directed by Dominique Soutif, aims to up-date and continue the inventory of Khmer inscriptions begun by George Cœdès and continued by Claude Jacques, and in so doing to renew the field of Khmer epigraphy. For information about the project, consult the website epigraphia.efeo.fr/CIK.

Vincent, 2017). As far as the United States are concerned, we are aware of one inscribed lotus-shaped vase in gold held at the Museum of Asian Art, in San Francisco (K. 1217), and a gilded bronze dagger in the Museum of Fine Art at Boston (K. 1048), while only one example of the in fact much more common category of inscribed stone stelae was known to us, at the time this paper was first written, from any public collection in the USA.

It is the small stela that was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met) in New York in 1999, and was assigned there the local inventory number 1999.199. This inscription was reported to the CIK, along with photographs, by Olivier de Bernon in a letter dated 5 September 2005, and has since been entered into the inventory of Khmer inscriptions under the number K. 1237. Kurt Behrendt, curator at the Met, at one stage furnished high-resolution scans of the stela. Arlo Griffiths was able to visit the Met on 17 April 2007 to inspect the object and verify the provisional decipherment prepared for the CIK by Gerdi Gerschheimer on the basis of the initially available photographs. The photographs which Arlo Griffiths took during his visit in 2007 are deposited in the *photothèque* of the EFEO at Paris, under numbers CIK_K1237-1 through CIK_K1237-10. This unusually mobile stone was subsequently transferred to the National Museum of Cambodia in August 2014. This made it possible to undertake the photogrammetry imaging used to illustrate the present article (fig. 1 and 2) as well as to verify previous readings during the final phase of preparation of this article.

Physical description

The object bearing the inscription K. 1237 is a stela of schist or schistous sandstone, of dark grey-blue color. Its top part is shaped in the form of a curly brace; the stela was originally mounted into some type of base by a tenon, from which it has been detached — probably recently and with conscious use of force, because the break makes a fresh, unweathered impression, different from the rest of the stone. From the top of the brace to the bottom-most remnant of the tenon, the stela measures 44 cm. At its base, it measures 26 cm in width; just before the brace at the top starts to curve inwards, it measures 25.5 cm. Its maximum depth is 2.2 cm. The small object weighs just 5.90 kg. The edges of only one face are polished — purposefully, it seems — to make them round, while those of the other are straight. The stela is inscribed with text in Angkorian Khmer script on both of its two faces. One of these (the one with rounded edges) is nearly fully covered with 19 lines of text. The language used here is Old Khmer. The unrounded face is only partially covered with text, 12 lines in this case. These lines, covering about the top $\frac{2}{3}$ of this face, form six Sanskrit stanzas in the *anuṣṭubh* meter (4 × 8 syllables per stanza), one hemistich per line, a wide gutter separating the even from the uneven *pādas*.

The contents of the inscription do not provide a decisive argument either way, but the physical appearance of the stela suggests that the rounded face fully covered with text in Khmer language was intended to be its front, whereas the face incompletely covered with metrical Sanskrit text was intended to be its back. However this may be, we designate the Khmer face as A, and the

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Sanskrit face as B. The Angkorian Khmer script that is used is uniform on both A and B and is paleographically compatible with production in the 11th–12th centuries CE.

The stela seems to have undergone some damage in the form of detachment of schistous layers, which has altered the expected shape of a few *akṣaras*: cf., e.g., *phduk* in A, l. 17, with our note. The same detachment could be responsible for the unusual appearance of the *akṣaras*, which cannot but be *va* and *bh*, in *de(vabh)ūmis* (B, *pāda* IVd). However, it is also possible that pre-existing irregularities in the stone made impossible the regular representation of the expected shapes. It seems that neither the Sanskrit nor the Khmer texts lack any *akṣaras*. There is only a small defect in the sign used to mark the end of the last stanza in the Sanskrit text.

Historical introduction

Before it surfaced in the collection of the Met, the stela was unknown to scholarship. The circumstances under which and the source from which it was acquired by the Met are not known with certainty,² and therefore we do not dispose of any information with regard to the provenance of the inscription.

We do know that in recent years, a number of forged pieces meant to pass for authentic Khmer inscriptions have appeared on the international art market. Some physical features of the stela give reason to ponder the question of its authenticity. In his technical report for the National Museum of Cambodia, Bertrand Porte³ observes that it is relatively rare to find inscribed stelae of such diminutive proportions in the corpus of Cambodian inscriptions, and that K. 1237 is probably the first known “portable” stela. He further notes that here is a considerable contrast between the quality and the regularity of the writing and the relative negligence of the edges of the support. Under the magnifying glass, the base of the engraving presents some micro-splinters and differences of coloration which could support the conclusion that the execution of the stela is recent. Finally, Bertrand Porte makes a comparison with K. 549, also a schist inscription, whose engraving is blunter than that of K. 1237 and whose coloration of the inscribed letters and uncarved surface is more uniform than in the case of K. 1237.

Despite the hesitation that is caused by these material aspects of the stela as well as by a number of scribal errors (see below) or inconsistencies in its content, there are also strong reasons to leave open the possibility that we are dealing with authentic textual material. The forgeries we have seen either constitute unreadable *imitations* of Khmer writing evidently executed without any understanding of the system of writing being imitated, or evident *copies* of known inscriptions. They are always large stones, with elaborate decorations evidently intended to raise commercial potential. K. 1237, on the other hand, is a small and undecorated stela. Its text is not a copy of any

² According to Gerdi Gerschheimer’s notes for the CIK project, the inscription was apparently bought by the museum from an antique store in Bangkok “L’inscription aurait été achetée par le musée à un antiquaire de Bangkok”.

³ The remainder of this paragraph is summarized from the report kindly shared with us by Bertrand Porte, stone conservation expert of the EFEO who works at the Museum.

known inscription but shows a compositional style, both in its Khmer and in its Sanskrit portions, that is quite consistent with what we find in authentic Cambodian inscriptions.

The inscription centers around a donation of pool(s) and wharfs by king Jayavarman III. Apparently under the reign of king Yaśovarman I, several inspectors of paddy submitted a petition for the wharfs to unload some portions (of their paddy) and for access to allow their boats to depart. The Khmer portion opens with a petition of two officials of which the first is named Mratāñ Śrī Bhūpendrasīnha. The second bears the title Steñ 'Añ 'Ācārya 'Adhyāpa[ka], which clearly indicates he was active in some kind of teacher's role, and so one can speculate on a connection with the single official mentioned as petitioner in the Sanskrit portion, a Vidyādhīpativarman, whose name (also attested in Khmer context in the inscription K. 1052 B, l. 14), opens with the element *vidyā* "knowledge". However, such speculation runs into severe chronological problems, as we will now explain.

The only date contained in the inscription figures at the start of the Khmer portion (A, l. 1): the 11th of the waning fortnight in the month of *māgha* in 779 *śaka*, i.e., an (unverifiable) date in the year 858 CE. The text implies that this date fell in the reign of *vrah kamrateñ 'añ* (V.K.'A.) *ta stāc dau paramēśvara* (A, l. 3–4), that is the posthumous name of the ruler Jayavarman II,⁴ whose reign is commonly assumed to have begun in 802 CE. Next, Jayavarman III (r. 839–877), is mentioned as *vrah pāda ta stāc dau viṣṇuloka* (A, l. 8). These two sovereigns reappear at ll. 14–15, before *vrah pāda ta stāc dau paramaśivaloka*, i.e., Yaśovarman I (r. 889–910), is mentioned in ll. 15–16. The petition in the Sanskrit portion is made to the ruler Sūryavarman, without there being any argument internal to the text to determine whether Sūryavarman I (r. 1002–1050) or II (r. 1113–1150) is intended.⁵ In any case, the ruler being petitioned is not the same here as any ruler appearing on face A, and the fact that no posthumous name is used here implies that the inscription dates from this ruler's reign. The references to events having occurred under earlier rulers are thus situated in the relatively remote past. Moreover, there is a clear disagreement between the dating of the petition recorded in the Khmer part to the year 858 CE, and the commonly accepted dates for the rulers Jayavarman II and III. While this chronological problem cannot be solved here,⁶ it is important to recall what has been observed by Griffiths & Soutif (2008–09: 44 n. 59):

The fact of linking real estate and position back to Jayavarman II is a recurring phenomenon that does not necessarily reflect a historical reality, but may be explained as due to a desire for legitimation. Compare the observation of George Cœdès (IC VII, p. 129): "For angkorian epigraphy that in fact begins with the reign

⁴ Cf. Jacques 2001 on the posthumous nomenclature of Khmer rulers.

⁵ The regnal years quoted here and elsewhere in this article are the ones indicated in the classic textbook Cœdès 1968. For a critique of Cœdès' historiography, which however does not affect the regnal years in question, see Vickery 2000.

⁶ If we accept that the inscription was composed some centuries after the reign of Jayavarman II, either in the 11th century (under the reign of Sūryavarman I) or in the 12th (under that of Sūryavarman II), it becomes possible to argue that the author of the inscription did not have access to reliable information regarding the dates of reign of sovereigns in the remote past.

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of Indravarman in 877, the reigns of Jayavarman II and his son, for whom not a single inscription has been found, represent a half-legendary period, to which the great priestly families ascribe the origins of their priesthood and owners of land the origin of their title deeds.”⁷

Edition*Spelling*

We would first like to call attention to a number of orthographic features that we consider to be characteristic of Khmer epigraphical documents, and that are therefore in most cases not flagged for correction in our edition below.

As is the norm in Sanskrit inscriptions from Cambodia, *avagraha* is not noted, and *visarga* is only used *in pausa*; elsewhere, one finds assimilation of final with initial sibilants; assimilation is also observed instead of the use of *anusvāra* for final *m* in sandhi. As a rule, consonants are doubled after *r* (expected doubling is not observed in B, IVd varjitā; Va *vima[[r]]dayanti*; VIa *vivardhayanti*).

The inscription *seems* to distinguish short *i* (represented by a circle) from long *ī* (which takes the form of a spiral or a circle with dot), but the distinction made in spelling often contravenes the norm (cf. A, ll. 3, 4, 6, 8; B, st. II d, Vb). Since Khmer inscriptions show a tendency towards non-distinction between *i* and *ī*, which in some inscriptions goes so far that only the sign for *i* is retained even in those words or names of Sanskrit origin where *ī* would be expected, we might leave open the possibility that the different signs used in this inscription had no difference of value for the engraver. The first occurrence of the word *tadīn* in l. 9, where the shape of the *i* (slightly open at 3 o’ clock) falls precisely between the two mentioned principal variants, could be used as argument for assuming equivalence of all variants.

As regards consonants, one notes that on face B, in *pāda* III d, the subscript of *°niṣṭhe* is clearly distinct from the subscript *ṭh* that figured twice previously (B, ll. 1 and 2). The distinction made between *ṭh* and *th* is strictly in accordance with the norm. By contrast, the fact that we find unexpected *ṇ* in the place name Kaṁvaṅ Khṇar (A, l. 9), elsewhere attested as Kaṁvaṅ Khnar, seems to be connected with a personal idiosyncrasy of the scribe. He uses this subscript even in such clusters as are commonly written with subscript *n* in Khmer epigraphy: *vaṁṇa* (A, l. 7); *viṣṇuloka* (A, ll. 8 and 15); conversely the loanwords *punya* and *tandula* (A, ll. 5 and 10), where no subscript is needed, are written with *n* rather than the *ṇ* required by the norms of Sanskrit. A single case of subscript *n* is found in the Khmer word *ṭhnyak* (A, l. 14). The scribe surely perceived no difference of sound between *n* and *ṇ*, but seems to have had a preference for *ṇ* whenever he needed a subscript sign.

⁷ Our translation. The original words are: “Le fait de se reporter au règne de Jayavarman II pour des biens fonciers et des fonctions est un phénomène récurrent qui ne correspond pas forcément à une réalité historique, mais pourrait s’expliquer par une volonté de légitimation. Cf. l’observation de George Cœdès (*IC* VII, p. 129) : « Pour l’épigraphie angkorienne qui commence en fait avec le règne d’Indravarman en 877, ceux de Jayavarman II et de son fils dont on n’a pas encore trouvé d’inscription constituent une époque semi-légendaire, à laquelle les grandes familles religieuses font remonter l’origine de leur sacerdoce, et les propriétaires de biens fonciers l’origine de leurs titres de propriétés. » ”

Scribal errors

Besides the mentioned orthographic features, a number of cases indicate that the scribe/engraver has gone about his work a bit less carefully than we are accustomed to in Khmer epigraphy, where blatant errors are not very common. Such blatant errors are, to begin with, identified most easily in the Sanskrit portion, since the language in question is very well known, and moreover couched in metrical form and hence governed by prosodic rules: besides two “normal” cases of *i* for *ī*, a subscript *n* has been omitted in II d ^onirajonidranirajah (for ^onirajonnidranirajah); in III c d, in ^obhūpendra dbarmanīṣṭbe (for ^obhūpendro dbarmanīṣṭbo), one combination of signs to make *o* has been entirely omitted, and another has been left unfinished so that it must be read *e*; an *i* vowel sign has been omitted in IV d vaṣayādhīpaiḥ (for viṣayādhīpaiḥ); the superscript *r* has been omitted in Va vimadayanti (for vimardayanti); the small stroke that distinguishes *ś* from *g* has been omitted in VI b ^odāsāmg (for ^odāsāmś). In IV d, finally, ^omates is most probably to be corrected to ^omatais, so we infer another omission of a graphic element (the one distinguishing *ai* from *e*), although the text would here be interpretable as it stands.

All in all there are at least six serious errors in the Sanskrit portion, all caused by the omission of a graphic element, in twelve lines. We may infer from these indisputable cases that the Khmer portion of the text will have been executed with a similar frequency of error, just about every second line. This is important, for the interpretation of any portion of text in this less known language is always marked by a number of uncertainties, among which the perennial problem of whether the engraved text actually agrees with what was intended to be expressed; or in other words, whether problems of interpretation are due to insufficiencies in our understanding, or to imperfections in the manufacture of the epigraphical document in question. To the extent that we are able to propose conjectures, these will be recorded below in notes to the edition; they will then of course be taken into account in the following translation, and if need be supported with arguments in our commentary.

Conventions

The editorial conventions we use are a selection from those adopted in Griffiths 2005:

- (...) surround graphic elements whose identification is uncertain but apparently in agreement with what is visible.
- [...] surround graphic elements that are entirely lost and are restored by conjecture.
- {n} surround a number of lost graphic elements corresponding to about *n akṣaras*.
- ˙ marks the consonantal element (glottal stop) inherent in the Khmer use of the “independent vowel signs” inherited from India (in Khmer portion only).
- marks *virāma*.

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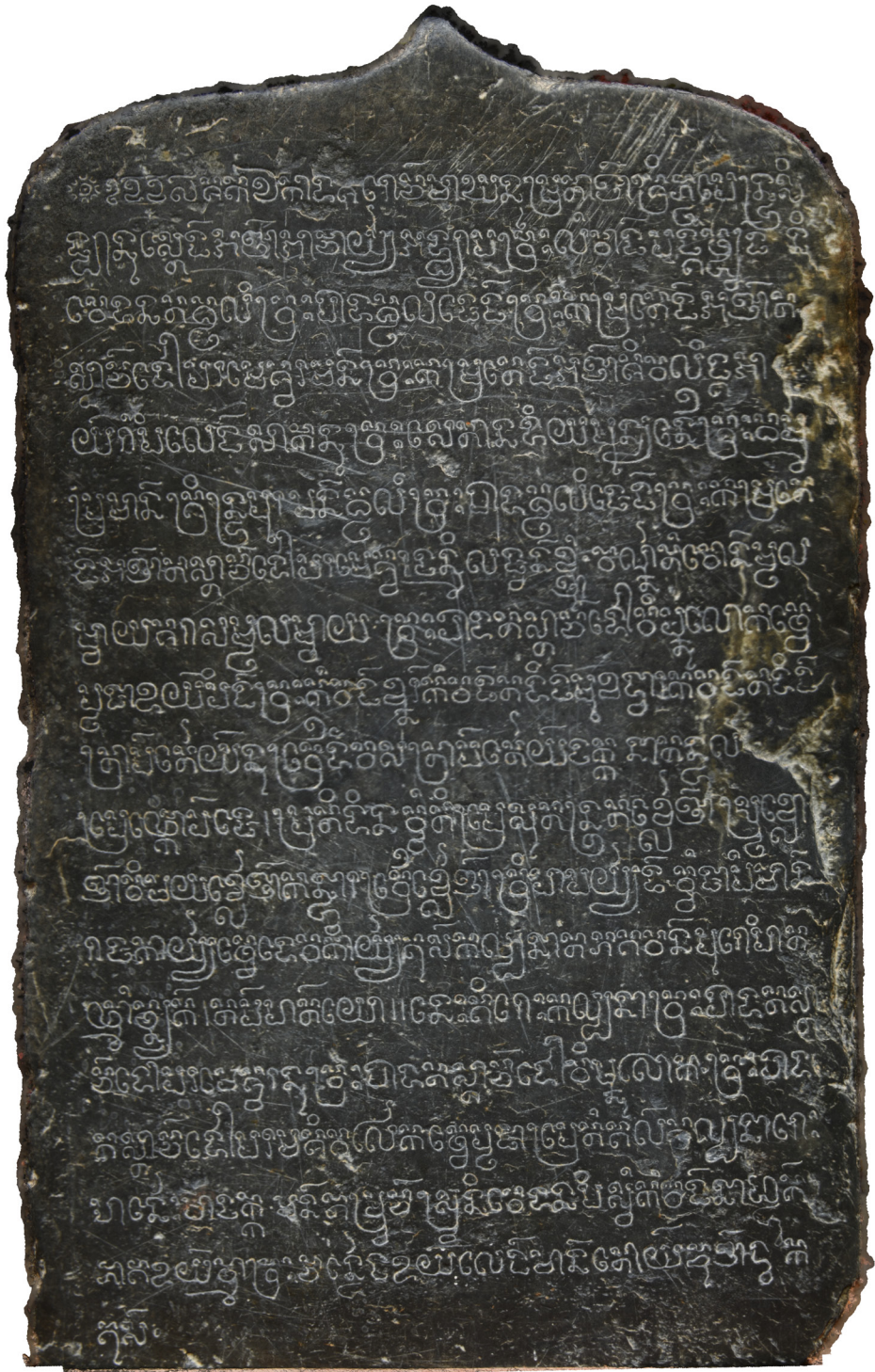


Figure 1: Stela of unknown provenance bearing K. 1237, face A, schist, 26 × 44 cm. Orthophoto based on photogrammetry by Adeline Levivier.

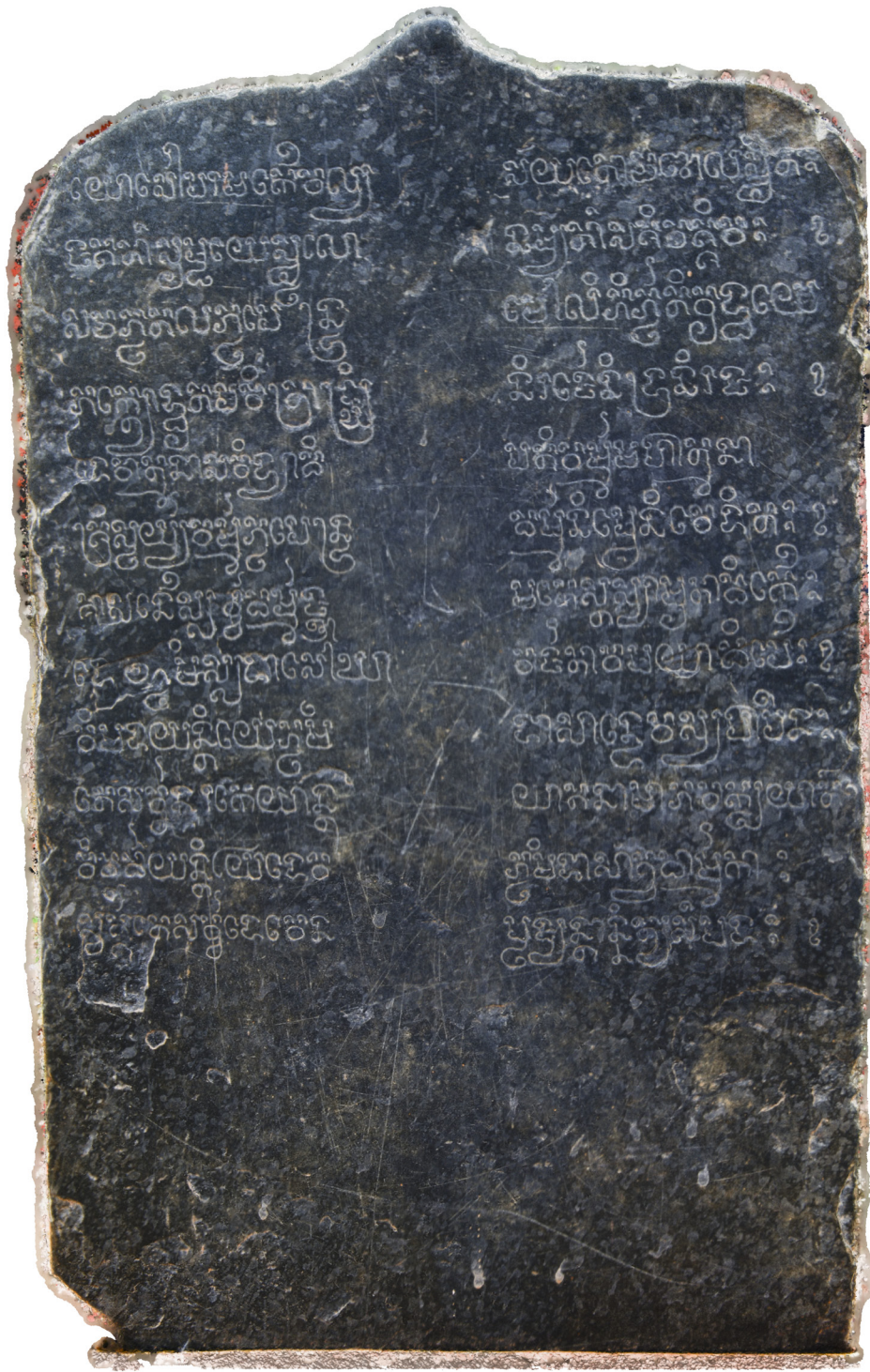


Figure 2: Face B of K. 1237. Orthophoto based on photogrammetry by Adeline Levivier.

Face A

- (1) 𑀓𑀓 || 779 śaka 'ekādaś(ī) roc· māgha nu mratāñ· śri bhūpendrasi-
 (2) ñha nu steñ· 'añ· 'ācāryya 'addhyāpa⁸ vraḥ lañvāñ· pañgam̐ thpvañ· ni-
 (3) vedana ta dhūli vraḥ pāda dhūli⁹ jeñ· vraḥ kamrateñ· 'añ· ta
 (4) s(t)āc· dau parameśvara man· vraḥ kamrateñ· 'añ· śivalīṅga 'ā-
 (5) [y·] rām̐ pi leñ· sāka nu vraḥ setā nadiya punya nai vraḥ dharmma
 (6) pramāñ· śrindrapura man· dhūli vraḥ pāda dhūli jeñ· vraḥ kamrate-
 (7) ñ· 'añ· ta stāc· dau parameśvara 'unmila jvan· khñuñ̐ O varṇṇa tamvon· mūla
 (8) mvāya śarāsa mūla mvāya vraḥ pāda ta stāc· dau viṣṇuloka thve
 (9) pūjā 'oy· piñ· vraḥ kañvañ· khṇar· kañvañ· tadiñ· mukhadvāra kavañ·¹⁰ tadiñ·
 (10) trāp· toy· nu vrañ dīvasa trāp· toy· 'ukka nā tandula
 (11) pre chkop· je I pratidina vvañ̐ ti pre sutantra ta khloñ· srū khlo-
 (12) ñ· viṣaya khloñ· kandvāra vrañ khloñ· vriha paryyañ·¹¹ vvañ̐ jā pī māñ·
 (13) rājakāryya thve devakāryya gus· kalpanā ta bhagavan· purohita
 (14) chmām̐ thnyak· I tap· hat· yo II neḥ gi roḥ kalpanā vraḥ pāda ta stā-
 (15) c· dau parameśvara nu vraḥ pāda ta stāc· dau viṣṇuloka O vraḥ pāda
 (16) ta stāc· dau paramaśivaloka thve pūjā pre taṅgal· (k)alpanā roḥ-
 (17) ha noḥha 'ukka • man· tamvraç· srū nivedana pi svañ̐ kañvañ· nā phduk·¹²
 (18) bhāga 'oy· thmā vraḥ candoña¹³ 'oy· leñ· māñ· toy· cuñ· dvaka
 (19) gus· O

Face B

- I. (1) yo sau paramakaivalyasa(m̐)yato cañcalasth(ī)t(a)ḥ
 (2) jagatām̐ sr̥ṣṭaye sthūlo namyatām̐ sa śivaś śivaḥ | |
 II. (3) sa ca bhūtalabhūpendramaulibhir̐ bhūtivṛddhaye
 (4) bhaktyoddhr̥ṭapavitrāñghrinirajonidranirajah¹⁴ | |

⁸ 'addhyāpa: correct to 'addhyāpaka.

⁹ dhūli ... dhūli: the form of the superscript vowel sign is slightly different in the two cases. Note the same phenomenon in line 6.

¹⁰ kavañ·: correct to kañvañ·; the absence of the expected anusvāra may be due to interference from the *u* of *viṣṇuloka* in the preceding line.

¹¹ paryyañ·: the shape of the *ñ* is irregular here. On the basis of the photographs, one might suspect the presence of a punctuation sign after this word, but inspection of the stone shows there is none.

¹² phduk·: it would be possible to read *phdvak·*. Our reading *u* in any case presupposes slight damage to the stone, if not sloppiness on the part of the engraver (as in *paryyañ·*, l. 12; *candoña*, l. 18).

¹³ candoña: the shape of the *na* is irregular. It would be possible to read *cando 'u*.

¹⁴ °nirajo nidranirajah: correct to °nirajonnidranirajah.

- III. (5) devātmanā sa vidyādhipativarmmamahātmanā
 (6) śr(ī)sūryyavarmabhūpendra dharmmaniṣṭhe¹⁵ niveditaḥ ||
- IV. (7) śāsanais sarvvadharmmajñāmates¹⁶ tasyāmṛtādhikaiḥ
 (8) de(vabh)ūmis sadāsaughā varjitā vaṣayādhipaiḥ¹⁷ ||
- V. (9) vimadayanti¹⁸ ye bhūmidāsān¹⁹ devasya pāpīnaḥ²⁰
 (10) te sarvvanarake yāntu yātanām ā bhavakṣayāt· ||
- VI. (11) vivardhayanti ye devabhūmidāsāmg²¹ ca dhārmikāḥ
 (12) svargg(e) te sarvvadevena pūjyantān nityasaṃpadaḥ ||

Translation

Face A

(1) 779 *śaka*, eleventh (*tithi*) of the waning [fortnight] of *māgha*.

(1–4) At that time (*nu*), Mratāñ Śrī Bhūpendrasīnha and Steñ 'Añ master of professors of the royal precincts (*vrah laṃvāñ*) respectfully petitioned (*paṅgam thpvañ nivedana*) His Majesty the King (*dhūli vrah pāda dhūli jeñ vrah kamrateñ 'añ*) who was pleased to go to Parameśvara (Jayavarman II):

(4–6) that (*man*) V.K.'A. Śivaliṅga at Rām be the property of the lineage (*pi leñ śaka*), together with the god (*vrah*) of Setā Nadī, (both *liṅga* and that god being) pious works at (*nai*) the Holy Foundation (*dharmma*) of the province of Śrīndrapura;

6–8) that His Majesty the King who was pleased to go to Parameśvara carry out the ceremonial opening of the (two deities') eyes and offer servants: one foreman (*mūla*) from the corporation (*vama*) of the Tampuon (tribe)²² (and) one foreman from (the corporation of the) archers (*śarāsa*).

¹⁵ °bhūpendra dharmmaniṣṭhe: correct to °bhūpendro dharmmaniṣṭho.

¹⁶ °mates: probably correct to °matais. The subscript *m* of the preceding line could explain the omission of the element that would make *tai* from *te*.

¹⁷ vaṣayādhipaiḥ: correct to viṣayādhipaiḥ.

¹⁸ vimadayanti: correct to vimardayanti; judging by the photos, it might seem that the absence of a required superscript *r* could be due to local detachment of the top layer of the stone's surface, which would have entailed the loss of the *r*, but inspection of the stone shows that no such detachment, and hence no loss of *r*, has in fact occurred here. The needed *r* was simply never written.

¹⁹ bhumi°: read bhūmi°.

²⁰ pāpīnaḥ: read pāpīnaḥ.

²¹ °dāsāmg ca: correct to °dāsāms ca.

²² The identification of *taṃvōn* with Tampuon should be treated with precaution. According to Gérard Diffloth (pers. comm., August 2017), the Tampuon and the Bahnar people were apparently settled, some centuries back, in what is today Kon Tum in central Vietnam. At the present state of our research, we do not know whether, in ancient times, the Khmer, the Tampuon and the Bahnar people knew one another nor whether the Khmer, if they did know them, at that time called the Tampuon *taṃvōn* as mentioned in our text. An extra reason for caution is the general fact that many ethnic names are recent.

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(8–10) The king (*vrah pāda*) who was pleased to go to the Viṣṇuloka (Jayavarman III) performed worship (*pūjā*), giving the pool (*pinī*) by the royal wharf (*kaṇṇvānī*) of the embankment, the wharf perpendicular to (*tadīn*) the front gate (*mukhadvāra*), the opposite wharf (lying) along (the royal wharf or the wharf perpendicular to the front gate or both of them) and also the Divasa forest (lying) along (the royal wharf or the wharf perpendicular to the front gate or both of them).

(11–12) Regarding rice (*nā tandulā*), he ordered a tax (*chkoṭ*) of 1 bushel (*je*) daily, not to be used independently from the authority of the paddy officers, the district officers, the officers of the forest chamber (? *kaṇḍvāra vraī*), the officers of paddy and oil.

(12–13) [He also ordered] that there ought not to be any royal corvée (claimed on its basis); [he ordered that] it produce solely temple corvée.

(13–14) Endowment (*kalpanā*) for the venerable officiant (*purohita*): 1 guardian of his resting-chamber; 2 *yo* of *tap bat* [cloth].

(14–15) Such were the endowments of the king (*vrah pāda*) who was pleased to go to Parameśvara and of the king who was pleased to go to the Viṣṇuloka.

(15–17) The king who was pleased to go to the Paramaśivaloka (Yaśovarman) also performed worship and ordered to maintain that endowment.

(17–19) The paddy inspector(s) (*tamvraṭ sruī*) submitted a petition (*nivedana pi svamī*) for a wharf on which to unload (*phduk*) their portion, [asking permission also to the king] to give (*ʿoy*) the stone (called) Vrah Candoñ (or the stone of Vrah Candoñ) so that (*ʿoy leñ mān toy*) the boats can be taken out.

Face B

I. Let that benign Śiva be paid homage, who [, though he ever] abides motionless, restrained in supreme (yogic) isolation, [also becomes] perceptible (*stbūla*) for the purpose of creating the universe!

II. And he (the king), the dustless (*nīraja*) full-blown (*unnidra*) lotuses (*nīra-ja*) of whose pure feet were taken up, out of devotion, by the crests of the kings on the surface of the earth, for the increase of prosperity, ...

III... he, the king Śrī Sūryavarman, having a firm base in *dharmā*, was petitioned by the reverend Vidyādhīpativarman, whose soul was [fixed] on the divine.

IV. By his (the King's) instructions, approved by all knowers of *dharmā*,²³ superior (in positive effects) even to ambrosia, the territory of the god, along with floods of slaves, was exempted from (taxation by) district-overseers.

V. To those sinners, who disturb the territory and the servants of the god, shall befall torture in all the hells, till the end of existence.

²³ We translate the emendation *sarvadharmmajñāmatas*. Were we to leave the text as it stands, then *sarvadharmmajñāmates* could be taken as a genitive agreeing with *taṣya*: “By the instructions of him, whose mind knew everything about *dharmā* ...”.

VI. Those righteous ones, who cause the land and the servants of the god to prosper, are to be worshipped by all the gods in heaven, forever prosperous.

Commentary on the Khmer (face A)

(2) The form *'addhyāpa* is likely to be a simple mistake for *'addhyāpaka*. The combination *'ācārya 'adhyāpaka* is found at K. 571, l. 15 (969 CE; *NIC* II–III, p. 112f.), which passage does not however help to explicate its meaning, so we translate mechanically. The expression *vrah lamvān* is found in a few inscriptions between the 10th and 12th century (K. 72, K. 194, K. 233 and K. 566).

(4–5) The toponym Rām is not attested in the corpus of Cambodian inscriptions known to us. Morphologically, it could be interpreted as the stem meaning “to dance” from which are derived two nouns often appearing in the epigraphic corpus: *rmān* “dancer” and *rpam* “dance, dancer”. In such a toponymic context, we would rather be inclined to make a connection with its homograph *rām* which has the same meaning as its derivation *ranām* “flooded forest” in modern Khmer (Headley *et al.* 1997: 1051, 1059).²⁴ In the Khmer dialect in Surin province (Thailand), the word means “small pieces of wood or twigs used as fuel”.²⁵

(5) The word *sāka* is very problematic. In modern Khmer, the same word means “to attempt”, which does not fit here. One could assume that *sāka* is an orthographic variant of the verb attested as *sak/ sakke*, whose meaning is “to steal”, but this does not fit either. It is perhaps significant that all other attestations of the combination *pi leñ*, that precedes *sāka*, are followed by the word *santāna* (or its synonym *kule*), meaning “family”. Cf. K. 194 (B l. 19; 1041 ś.; *BEFEO* 43, p. 144, 150) *pi leñ ta santāna* “so that henceforward they pertain to the lineage”; K. 254 (B l. 14; 1051 ś.; *IC* III, p. 185, 190) *pi leñ ta kule ta sruk svāy pañcaka thve nu gi cyar* “respectfully petitioned ... that ... the *śivaliṅga* at Rām belong to the lineage”; K. 989 (d l. 4; 989 ś.; *IC* VII, p. 178, 189) *pi leñ ta santānavardhe* “in view of the prosperity of his family”. A reading *pañgam thpvañ nivedana ... man ... śivaliṅga 'ay rām pi leñ ta santāna* “respectfully petitioned ... that ... the *śivaliṅga* at Rām belong to the lineage” would make good sense, but involves such a bold emendation that we do not dare to adopt it. We rather settle for assuming that *sāka* is an alternative spelling for *śākha*, in the sense of “line of descent” (Jenner 2009b: 587, *s.v.*), which would make *pi leñ sāka* equivalent to *pi leñ ta santāna*, with the *ta* perhaps dropped by accident. For a detailed discussion of the epigraphic occurrences of the term *śākha* and its variant *sāka*, see Lowman 2013: 30–31; we don’t think that his translation of the term as “property history” fits all occurrences.

The toponym *setā nadiya* at first sight seems to be a Pali or Pali-like form corresponding

²⁴ The term *ram* “flooded forest” does not appear alone; it is attested in the expression *ramrām* “cave and flooded forest”.

²⁵ M. Antelme, pers. comm., August 2017.

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to Sanskrit *śvetā nadi*, “white river”. Not only this combination, but even the single Sanskrit word *nadi*, does not seem to be attested elsewhere as loanword in any Khmer context. It is, however, also possible to take the form *setā nadiya* as a Khmer variant of an attested Sanskrit river name *sītā nadi* “white river”. This form is attested in K. 806/883 ś., st. CCLXXIII (*IC I*, p. 73). The river’s name also appears with long vowel *ī*, i.e. as *sītānadi* in two other Sanskrit texts: K. 180 (contemporary of K. 806, Cœdès 1913: 17) and K. 449/991 ś. (Cœdès 1913: 43).²⁶ The shift from the short *i* (*sītā*) to the long one (*sītā*) can be explained either by the demands of meter or by influence of Khmer phonology. In a sesquisyllabic language like Khmer, a short vowel in an initial syllable of a disyllable word will tend to be weakened to schwa or vanish altogether (Lewitz 1968: 155); in order to rescue such vowels, Khmer speakers had to make them long. In any case, the result was a change in the meaning of the name of the river. It may be understood as *Sītā*’s river. Why would our author have written *setā* instead of *sītā/sītā*? We have not found any examples of such a change from the *i/ī* to *e* in Cambodian epigraphy. However, note that in Khmer manuscripts of the middle and modern periods, the name *Sītā* is spelled *Setā* and pronounced /seda:/.

(6) The *pramān śrindrapura* is known from K. 105, l. 4 (*IC VI*, p. 183) and K. 325 A, l. 6–7 (*NIC II–III*, p. 67); a city of Indrapura is further mentioned in K. 151/598 ś., st. V (Cœdès 1943: 5); K. 235, passim; K. 989 B, l. 9 (*IC VII*, p. 164). According to Long Seam 2007: 46, it was situated in the region of Thbong Khmum, Kompong Cham province.

(7) We presume that *’unmīla*, not known elsewhere in Khmer, has the same sense as the more common Sanskrit loanword *’unmīlita* (Jenner 2009b: 769, *s.v.*); while the latter word is quite broadly attested in the corpus, *’unmīla* itself is found elsewhere only in Sanskrit context, and only once (K. 111, st. LXX; 890 ś.; *IC VI*, p. 200, 209). The word *śarāsa*, also taken from Sanskrit, does not appear to be attested elsewhere in the corpus, whether in Khmer or in Sanskrit, but one Sanskrit inscription does offer a closely related derivation from the same compound, viz. *śarāsana*: cf. K. 213 (6th c. ś.; *ISC*, pp. 26, 28) *śarāsānodyogajitārthadāna*- “riches conquered by the efforts of the bow”²⁷.

(9) Although combinations involving *kbnar* “embankment” occur several times, the spelling with *ṅ*, as in *kaṁvaṅ kbṅar* here, is not attested elsewhere;²⁸ one might consider the possibility that the two attestations of a presumed toponym *Kaṁvaṅ Khtār* in K. 421 (ll. 1, 15; 7th c. ś.; *IC V*, p. 272), are to be read as *kaṁvaṅ kbṅar*, because the writing of K. 421 is quite sloppy.²⁹ The present interpretation in any case does not assume that *kaṁvaṅ kbṅar* denotes a place name.

The word *mukhadvāra* is attested in the Sanskrit inscription K. 826, st. XX = K. 713, st. XXIII

²⁶ Ian Lowman (2013: 45, n. 65) thinks that the river might be identifiable as the Tampan River of Battambang which was the province’s principal water course before it was diverted in the 19th century into the present-day Sanke river. Further evidence is needed to support this hypothesis.

²⁷ Our translation. The original words are: “richesses conquises par l’effort de l’arc”.

²⁸ We have proposed above that this is due to an idiosyncrasy of the scribe.

²⁹ See EFEO estampage n. 880.

(early 9th c. ś.; *IC I*, pp. 16, 21, 27):

nyastam̐ jñānadhanam̐ yasya manaḥkośe sarasvatī
 nityam̐ rakṣitukāmeva mukhadvāre sthitābhavat
 “As though desiring to protect the wealth of knowledge deposited in the store-house
 of his reign (i.e. that of Indravarman, r. 877–889), Sarasvatī always remained in the
 gate of his mouth.”³⁰

The surrounding stanzas suggest that a double entendre is at work, and that *mukhadvāra* is also to be taken here in an architectural sense, i.e., “Sarasvatī was erect in the main gate”. This idea is supported especially by the occurrence of a *caturmukhadvāra* in the Sanskrit of K. 323 (*ISC*, p. 391), while the occurrence in the Khmer of K. 425 (l. 11; 890 ś.; *IC II*, p. 142) is equally uninformative as ours.

(10) The expression *trāp toy*, here rendered as “lying along”, is not known elsewhere. It is interesting to note that coordination seems to be effected here by the structure *trāp toy nu ...* followed by *trāp toy ukka ...* “**both** lying along ... **and** lying along ...”.

(11) On the word *chkeop*, previously unattested in Angkorian Khmer, see the lemma for its pre-Angkorian equivalent in Jenner 2009a: 138. The expression *vam̐ ti pre sutantra* is unprecedented in this precise form. The common expression, found numerous times, is *vam̐ jā pi sutantra/ svatantra*. Note that the expected element *vam̐ jā pi* “it is not suitable that”, actually occurs in the continuation of this phrase.

The expression *kandvāra vraī* is otherwise unknown. The context of K. 158d, ll. 3–8, cited by Jenner (2009b: 8), although lacking *vraī*, shares some other elements with ours, and might be related. The expression *chmām̐ thnyak* is equally unprecedented. It seems to correspond in meaning to *chmām̐ vrah̐ keralā phdam̐* “guardian of the royal bed-chamber”, which is frequently attested. Ph. N. Jenner explains that the infix used to derive *thnyak* from *tyak* “to rest” most likely yields a meaning “resting-place” rather than the action noun “sleep”.

(14) *tap̐ hat̐ yo 2*: the same measure is found in K. 207 (l. 13–14; *IC III*, 20, n. 5) as *tap̐ hat̐ yau vyar* — see Cœdès’ note. On the unit of measure *yo* (*yau*), see Griffiths & Soutif 2008–09, on K. 1238 A, l. 14. The expression *tap̐ hat̐* “ten cubits” seems to denote a type of cloth.

(17–19) The word *phduk* — on form and meaning, see Jenner 2009b: 393, *s.v.* —, perhaps connectible with *duk/ dvak* “boat” (cf. Jenner 2009b: 258, *s.v.* *duk* ~ *duk*), seen in l. 18, is found in a single other inscription, K. 380 E, where the garbled context has prevented conclusive interpretation by our

³⁰ Our translation. The original words are: “Comme par désir de garder le trésor de connaissance déposé dans le magasin de son [= Indravarman, r. 877–889] esprit, Sarasvatī (l’Éloquence) se tenait continuellement dans la porte de sa bouche.”

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predecessors. That context seems somehow related to ours, and is therefore worth quoting, though we cannot translate it either: *nā bhāga vīra nu rājakaṣatra nu phduk v- -* (l. 17; 960 ś.; IC VI, p. 262).

Ph. N. Jenner (pers. comm., 2009) has suggested to us that *candoṅa* is a variant spelling of *camdoṅ*, a word to which he assigns the sense of “spout (of ewer or the like)” (Jenner 2009b: 177, s.v.). Nearly the same spelling variant is found also in the place name *sruk candoṅ vuro pramān śreṣṭhapura* mentioned in K. 337, A l. 5 (815 ś.; estampage BN 110 (13) = l. 4 in NIC II–III, p. 87). However, S. Pou (2004: 158–159) proposes that the same word *camdoṅ* means “medium-sized” in Old Khmer and corresponds to the modern Khmer term *camdañ* “youthful”. If this proposal holds good, the term *camdoṅ* or *candoṅ* could also mean “young, youthful”. The expression *vrah candoṅ* could then be rendered as “youthful god”, and *thmā³¹ vrah candoṅ* “stone of the youthful god” or “stone called Youthful God”. Any certain identification of this god cannot be made at present, although one is tempted to suggest Kumāra. However this may be, the stone in question seems to have been a type of stone used as barrier to block the flow of water; “to give the stone” thus may have meant granting the right of removing the barrier.

The expression *’oy leṅ mān toy* “so that” seems to be a pleonasm because *’oy leṅ mān*, though it is not attested as such in any dictionary, can be understood as an optative marker meaning “so that” and *toy* according to Jenner (2009b: 207) functions as a preposition with the meaning of “for the purpose of, in order to”.

Commentary on the Sanskrit (face B)

I. If *paramakaivalya* is an allusion to the posthumous name Paramakaivalyapada of Jayavarman VI (r. 1080–1107), this means that the Sūryavarman mentioned in st. III of this inscription is Sūryavarman II (r. 1113–1150).

II–III. As they stand, these two stanzas cannot be interpreted, and several emendations are required to restore what was quite certainly the intended sense. Restoring *bbūtalabbhūpendramaulibhir ... uddbr̥ṭapavitrāṅghrinīrajonnidranīrajah*, yields an image that is common-place in the Khmer corpus: a king’s lotus feet are raised to the crests of other kings on earth, as mark of their submission.³² The word *unnidra* “full-blown”, that results from our emendation, does not seem to be attested in the corpus, but is common-place in Sanskrit literature.³³ As it stands, the text contains the *hapax*

³¹ There are two spellings for what basically seems to be a single word meaning ‘stone’ attested in Old Khmer inscriptions: *thmā* and *thmo*. The first one is less common than the latter and appears often in 10th-century inscriptions. The form *thmā* is also a homograph of *thmā* “measure of quantity, time and distance”. See Jenner 2009b: 233.

³² Cf. K. 158, st. IIIa *bhūpālāsīrodbr̥ṭāṅghrir*; K. 228, st. IXb *vidbr̥ṭāṅghripadmah*; K. 717, st. II *[ja]yaviravarmā [...]* *uddbr̥ṭapadapadmah*; K. 834, st. XLIV *bhūbhṛṅmūrdhboddbṛṭāṅghrir*.

³³ E.g., Viṣṇupurāṇa, crit. ed. Vadodara, 1.9.115 *namasye sarvalokānām janānim abjasambhavām | śrīyam unnidrapadmākṣīm viṣṇuvakṣahsthalasthitām* “I pay homage to the Lotus-born Mother of the entire universe, Śrī, who has eyes like full-blown lotuses, who abides on the surface of Viṣṇu’s breast”.

legomenon (*a*)*nidranīraja* “He of the unsleeping lotus”, that would not be satisfactorily interpretable in the context.

The play on two meanings of *nīraja* was a favorite of the Khmer poets, as is clear from the following stanzas:

K. 382 D, st. VI (*ISCC*, pp. 537, 543)

nīra(ja)śc(e)ta(s)ā yasya nīrajāsanāsanmateḥ
(n)ī(raja)s(y)eva pādasya nīrajo ra(ja)sā jagat | |

Grâce à l’esprit sans passion (*nīrajas*) de cet homme pour qui la pensée des gens de bien était un siège de lotus [sans poussière, *nīraja*], le monde était sans poussière [sans passion, *nīrajas*], comme il le serait avec la poussière d’un pied sans poussière [d’un pied qui serait un lotus, *nīraja*]. (transl. Cœdès)

K. 834, st. XXVI (*IC V*, pp. 252, 260)

juṣṭaḥ punyajanaīr ājīdurjayo jāṅghrinīraje
yo jasraṁ nīrajobhaktir arājad rājarājavat | |

Aimé des gens possédant des mérites [ou : aimé des Yakṣa], invincible dans le combat, pratiquant une dévotion sans tache (*nīrajas*) à l’égard des nymphéa (*nīraja*) des pieds d’Aja [ou : du bélier], il brillait comme un roi des rois (= Kubera) [ou : comme la lune]. (transl. Cœdès)

V–VI. The two stanzas constitute a pair of imprecation-benediction verses. At first glance, they look as common as any other examples of the genre. But we notice some expressions which do not seem to be attested in the extant Cambodian inscriptions, such as *vimardayanti*, *sarvanarake*, *ā bhavakṣayāt*, *sarvadevena pūjyantān* and *nityasampadaḥ*.

Instead of the verb *vimṛd* “to disturb”, imprecations in Sanskrit verses are generally composed with the following verbs: *hr̥* “to steal”, *lup* “to violate” and *nī* “to take”. Likewise, the compound *sarvanarake* “in all the hells” seems to be a hapax legomenon; we often find, in this context, the enumeration of the numbers of the hells (either thirty-two or twenty-one) or the mention of specific names of hells (such as *Avīci* and *Mahāraurava*).

To express the eternity of the condemnation to hell, the cursers refer very often to the existence of the Sun and the Moon (for instance *yāvat sūryyaś ca candraś ca* “as long as the Sun and the Moon (exist)” in K. 109 S dated 655 CE). Some authors of Sanskrit inscriptions refer also to the existence of the Brahmanical triad (Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Śambhu in K. 376) or the polar star (K. 872), while some others use the following expressions: *cīram* “for a long time” (K. 109 S, K. 81, K. 162 and K. 158), *cīrataram* “for a very long time” (K. 14), *sucīram* “for a very long time” (K. 872), *pañcājanīyam* “during five generations” (K. 814), *samasahasram* “for a thousand years” (K. 1250) and *ā yugantāt* “till

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the end of the aeon” (K. 275). The expression *ā bhavakṣayāt* “till the end of existence” is comparable to the last expression in the list.

The benedictory elements *sarvadevena pūjyantām* “may they be worshipped by all the gods” and *nityasāmpadaḥ* “(may they be) always prosperous” are quite unique. The common reward for good-hearted men that we find in such Sanskrit verses is residence in heaven (*svarga*). K. 720, for example, mentions *svargam nityam vasanti te* “they will stay in heaven forever”. There exist some other inscriptions which promise other rewards, and *sāmpad* “good fortune” is among them (K. 352, K. 485 and K. 1141) but not *nityasāmpad* as in K. 1237. In the formulae of benedictions composed in Khmer language, we normally find the verb *svēy* “to enjoy” or *mān* “to obtain”. These are combined with various words expressing rewards, but the term *sāmpad* seems to be absent. Nevertheless, we have found a comparable boon in K. 212/949 ś. (*IC III*, pp. 31–32):

ye varddhayanti punyan te lokam gacchanti sāmpadam
paścāt gacchanti devānām svarggam prāpya surārccanam

“May those who will cause the pious work to prosper go to blessed world and after that to the heaven of the gods, having earned the respect that is due to gods.”³⁴

Conclusion

The Khmer text shows an unmistakable internal coherence if we consider the water-related terms *nadiya* “river” (Old Khmer, from Sanskrit *nadi*), *piṅ* “pool or lake”, *kaṁvaṅ* “wharf” and *dvak* “boat”, and perhaps also the term *raṁ* discussed in our commentary above. The inscription contains previously unknown Sanskrit stanzas of a level of complexity that is perhaps not very ambitious, but still far beyond the compositional capacity of anybody likely to be involved in the forgery of inscriptions. In addition, there is some degree of consistency between the Sanskrit and Khmer texts of the inscription. As mentioned earlier, the script of both the texts is uniform and their content generally accords with one another. We refer to the repeated occurrence of the word *nivedana* in the Khmer, matched by *niveditaḥ* in the Sanskrit (A, ll. 2–3, 17; B, st. III); the mention of limits posed on tax-collection by district officers in both parts (A, ll. 11–13; B, st. IV); and the prominent role of a Śivaliṅga (A, ll. 4–5) on one, and the invocation of Śiva on the other face (B, st. I). The protagonist in the Sanskrit text, Vidyādhipativarman, a subject of King Sūryavarman I or Sūryavarman II, was probably responsible for the production of the inscription. He relates a narrative from the distant past, namely from the reigns of Jayavarman II, Jayavarman III and Yaśovarman I, concerning the succession of a priestly family over roughly two and a half centuries. This is quite common in Cambodian epigraphy; K. 235 is a notable example. The Khmer text contains

³⁴ Our translation. The original words are: “(Que) ceux qui feront prospérer cette œuvre pie aillent dans un séjour fortuné, et aillent ensuite au ciel des dieux, ayant obtenu le respect dû aux dieux.”

a considerable quantity of “unknown” words, but there is nothing suspicious about this as most new texts in Old Khmer contain new lexical data. However, some doubt does remain regarding the internal coherence of the text of the inscription. This doubt is reinforced by the “modern” aspect of the carving, as discussed above. In conclusion, we may suggest that the stela is not “fully” authentic, that is, the composition of both Khmer and Sanskrit texts may indeed be old but the stone “support” for these texts could be recent. The modern forger(s) of the inscription could then either have copied the Sanskrit and Khmer texts verbatim from an authentic inscription or have combined passages copied from multiple authentic inscriptions. Such a hypothesis might conveniently explain both the physical “modernity” of the stela, and the problematic aspects of its contents.

Abbreviations

IC	<i>Inscriptions du Cambodge</i> , cf. Cœdès 1937–1966.
ISC	<i>Inscriptions sanscrites du Cambodge</i> , cf. Barth 1885.
ISCC	<i>Inscriptions sanscrites de Campā et du Cambodge</i> , cf. Bergaigne 1893.
NIC II-III	<i>Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge</i> , cf. Pou 2001.

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A problematic inscription (K. 1237)
Arlo Griffiths & Kunthea Chhom

ផ្ទាំងចារឹកតូចប្រឡឹង ដែលមានអត្ថបទមិនទាន់មានគេប្រែក. ១២៣៧ មួយនេះ មានប្រភពមិនជាក់លាក់។ គេសង្ស័យថា ចារឹកនេះមិនសុទ្ធទេ ដោយសារលក្ខណៈរូបរាងថ្ម និងកំហុសរបស់អ្នកធ្លាក់ ឬភាពមិនប្រក្រតីនានានៅក្នុងអត្ថបទ។ យើងខ្ញុំនឹងអាន បកប្រែ និងអត្ថាធិប្បាយពាក្យខ្លះផ្នែកនិរុត្តិសាស្ត្រនៅក្នុងអត្ថបទចារឹកនេះ។ យើងខ្ញុំនឹងពន្យល់អំពីបញ្ហាទាក់ទងនឹងរូបរាងថ្ម និងបញ្ហាទាក់ទងនឹងការតែងនិពន្ធអត្ថបទចារឹកនេះទាំងភាសាខ្មែរនិងភាសាសំស្ក្រឹត។ លក្ខណៈមិនប្រក្រតីទាំងអម្បាលម៉ាន នាំឲ្យយើងអាចសន្និដ្ឋានបានថា ផ្ទាំងចារឹកនេះ មិនសុទ្ធទាំងស្រុងទេ ហើយក៏មិនក្លែងក្លាយទាំងស្រុងដែរ។

Abstract

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The tiny stela bearing the unpublished inscription K. 1237 is of unknown provenance. Some material aspects of the stela, and a number of scribal errors or other anomalies in the textual content of the inscription, make its authenticity uncertain. This paper furnishes an edition of the inscription, with translation and philological commentary. The problematic material aspects of the stela, and problematic compositional aspects of the Khmer and Sanskrit texts of the inscription are exposed, leading to the conclusion that the inscription is neither fully authentic nor fully fake.

Résumé

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La minuscule stèle, support de l'inscription inédite K. 1237, est d'origine inconnue. On a beaucoup hésité sur son authenticité du fait de certains aspects matériels de la stèle elle-même et d'un certain nombre d'erreurs de la part du scribe, ainsi que d'anomalies dans le contenu du texte. Cet article fournit une édition de l'inscription, avec une traduction et des commentaires philologiques. Les aspects matériels problématiques de la stèle, comme les aspects problématiques de composition des textes khmer et sanskrit, sont abordés, ce qui nous amène à la conclusion que cette stèle n'est ni « totalement » un document authentique, ni « totalement » un faux.