

CARVED CHANTS AND SERMONS ON STONE:  
EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FOR BUDDHIST LITERATURE  
IN MIDDLE CAMBODIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Stone inscriptions from Middle Cambodia, particularly records of pious donations carved between the mid-sixteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, are key sources for understanding the diverse and regionally connected Buddhist literature of this period. The epigraphical record provides three types of evidence that help build a picture of Middle-period Buddhist texts in Cambodia: 1) stylistic choices, particularly the use of bilingual Pali-Khmer prose; 2) direct quotations from Pali and Khmer texts, and 3) citations of titles of Pali liturgical chants, Pali-Khmer sermons, and a chanted Siamese poem. The cumulative force of this evidence builds a strong foundation for the historical study of Buddhist genres preserved in colonial-era palm-leaf and leporello manuscript collections.*

Middle-period Cambodia, particularly during the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries, was home to a diverse and regionally integrated Buddhist culture.<sup>1</sup> Archaeological evidence, reports by foreign travelers, and clues from local chronicles and Chinese dynastic annals make clear that Cambodians were engaged in extensive foreign trade, and that some of the wealth generated

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this essay I follow Mahā Bidūr Krassem, Saveros Pou, Grégory Mikaelian, Ashley Thompson, and others in preferring the term “Middle Period” (*époque moyenne; samāy kaṅṅal*) to refer to post-Angkorian Cambodia between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, bookended by the decline of Angkor and the establishment of the French protectorate. For a detailed historiographic explanation of why the more neutral term “Middle Period” and its equivalents are less problematic in the Cambodian context than “modern” or even “early modern,” see Mikaelian, “Des sources lacunaires,” 272–276. Ashley Thompson likewise offers a compelling defense for the ongoing use of the terms “Middle Period” and “Post-Angkorian” (Thompson, “Early Theravādin Cambodia”).

through commerce, hunting, gathering, and agriculture went to support Buddhist activities.<sup>2</sup> Several dozen dated inscriptions at Angkor Wat and other sites provide ample evidence for how wealth accumulated by pilgrims, dignitaries, and members of the royal family might be donated to Buddhist ends, including the construction of religious images and buildings, the liberation of slaves, and the sponsorship of various rites, sermons, and other ceremonies. What texts guided these pious acts and the ritual economy they engendered?

This question is hard to answer, for very little indigenous Buddhist literature from early modern Cambodia has been published, let alone critically edited or translated.<sup>3</sup> Pinning down a timeline for this literature is challenging, for only rarely do texts copied in traditional manuscripts indicate where, when, or by whom they were composed. Texts in circulation between 1550 and 1750 are presumably found inside the numerous palm-leaf and leporello manuscripts copied in later eras. Such documents number in the low tens of thousands, and primarily date from the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries; virtually no manuscripts survive in Cambodia at all prior to the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> These constraints narrow our inquiry considerably: which Buddhist ritual and sermon texts found in colonial-era manuscripts were actually transmitted between 1550 and 1750?

This article offers a critical reassessment of the epigraphical data to answer this question. I focus on three types of evidence in inscriptions from this period: distinctive writing techniques, direct quotations, and citations of titles. My findings show that Middle Cambodian Buddhist literature was transmitted in a variety of languages, including Pali, Khmer, and Siamese in addition to the dominant bilingual Pali-Khmer format. A close analysis of the inscriptions also reveals direct quotations from one Khmer and two Pali texts, as well as citations of the titles of eighteen different Pali, Pali-Khmer, and Siamese liturgical and homiletic texts. My rereading of the epigraphical record has a singular purpose: to provide a solid historical foundation for a critical reading of the manuscript tradition. To that end, I conclude with a reflection on how to approach the temporal and linguistic layers of Buddhist texts copied on palm-leaf and leporello formats during the colonial era.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding Cambodian trading networks in this period, see Polkinghorne *et al.*, “Consumption and exchange in Early Modern Cambodia”; Groslier, “Angkor et le Cambodge au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle”; Mak, *Histoire du Cambodge, de la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*; and Vickery, “Cambodia and its Neighbors in the 15th century.”

<sup>3</sup> By “Buddhist literature,” I am thinking of specifically religious genres, such as scripts for public sermons (*sāstrā desan\**), private manuals for ritual and meditation practices (*ḥpuon*), and liturgical chants performed by monastics or laypeople (*brah paritt*, *lpök brah dharm*, etc.). This narrow definition excludes didactic poems (*ḥpāp’*, *lpök ap’ram*, etc.), narrative verse (*sāstrā lpaen*, *pralom lok puran*), and legal, historical, and administrative documents. On these and other categories of precolonial Cambodian literature, see Au, *Catalogue du fonds khmer*, viii–x; and de Bernon *et al.*, *Inventaire provisoire des manuscrits du Cambodge, Première partie*, xxiii–xxvii.

<sup>4</sup> One possible exception, and indeed one of the oldest known manuscripts in Cambodia, is FEMC [Fonds pour l’Edition des Manuscrits du Cambodge] C.48, a Pali fragment of the *Cittagantḥidīpami* inscribed in Siam and brought to Cambodia at an unknown date. The Thai-language colophon is largely effaced, but the script can be paleographically dated to 1650–1750 CE. See Walker, “Siamese Manuscripts in Cambodian Collections,” xcvi–ci.

## TOWARDS A HISTORY OF MIDDLE-PERIOD BUDDHIST LITERATURE

With the exception of Vietnam, print technology arrived relatively late to mainland Southeast Asia. Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, all texts in Cambodia were therefore transmitted orally or via handwritten manuscripts. The most numerous such manuscripts to survive today are in incised palm-leaf format, of which perhaps twenty thousand or so remain.<sup>5</sup> Each palm-leaf manuscript usually contains between one and ten fascicles (Khmer *ksae*; cf. Thai *phūk*), though some have considerably more.<sup>6</sup> Each fascicle, in turn, contains an average of about thirty individual leaves or folios. A much smaller number of manuscripts survive in the accordion-folded bark-paper or leporello format; no more than a thousand such manuscripts are known.<sup>7</sup> With vanishingly few exceptions, almost all of the dated manuscripts that survive in Cambodia were copied between the 1860s and the 1960s, with the majority between the 1910s and 1950s.<sup>8</sup> That said, most of the texts transmitted in manuscript form were composed long before the twentieth century. These include Pali scriptures and commentaries from first- and early second-millennium India and Sri Lanka, second-millennium Pali ritual and liturgical texts from Southeast Asia, and a variety of mid- to late second-millennium literary, technical, exegetical, and homiletic texts in Khmer or in a bitextual Pali-Khmer format, a sizable portion of which were translated from Siamese or have parallels in other Tai languages across Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Yunnan, including Khün, Lanna, Lao, and Lü.

How might we construct a timeline for the Buddhist literature transmitted in Middle Cambodia? The obstacles are numerous. While scribal colophons are common, authorial colophons are extremely rare outside of Khmer literary texts in verse.<sup>9</sup> Neither the date nor the author's name is definitively known for the vast majority of Buddhist compositions in Khmer or in bitextual Pali-Khmer prose. A few Buddhist verse texts in Khmer contain authorial colophons indicating when and by whom they were translated from Pali or Siamese.<sup>10</sup> Original Buddhist verse in Khmer is

<sup>5</sup> I am aware of 13,897 catalogued manuscripts from Phnom Penh, Kandal, Kampong Cham, and Siem Reap provinces, including 1,633 in de Bernon *et al.*, *Inventaire provisoire des manuscrits du Cambodge, Première partie*, 3,357 in de Bernon *et al.*, *Inventaire provisoire des manuscrits du Cambodge, Deuxième partie*; and 8,907 in unpublished FEMC materials. Field research has shown that certain provinces are almost entirely devoid of manuscript collections, but extensive uncatalogued collections are believed to remain in some areas. For a summary account of the number of Khmer manuscripts surviving in Europe, see Mikaelian, "Des sources lacunaires," 259–260.

<sup>6</sup> Manuscripts of the Khmer translation of the *Maṅgalatthadīpanī* can be particularly voluminous (FEMC b.119.III.2 is numbered up to fascicle 55, for example). The two parts of the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* are complete in forty fascicles.

<sup>7</sup> Only 375 such manuscripts are cataloged in FEMC materials. In "Unfolding Buddhism" (660–664), I identify a further thirty-five handwritten leporellos in Cambodia. Additional leporellos are assumed to remain in private and temple collections in rural areas.

<sup>8</sup> This is based on my unpublished survey of colophons in two FEMC-curated collections, Vatt Bhūmi Thmī in Kampong Cham and the Bibliothèque EFEO - Preah Vanarāt Ken Vong in Phnom Penh. A cursory examination of colophons from other Cambodian collections confirms this overall pattern. Cambodian manuscripts kept in France and Britain are generally older, with most copied between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>9</sup> For more on dated authorial colophons in *sastrā lpaen*, see Santi Pakdeekham, *Sāstrā lpaen*, 182–189.

<sup>10</sup> A notably early example is *Lpök kammatthān*, a versified chant for funerary rites translated into Khmer from a

generally anonymous and undated prior to the colonial period. Reports by Chinese, Japanese, and European travelers and missionaries—crucial sources for confirming other aspects of Cambodian history—are of no use for tracing a literary history of Buddhist texts, for no such document mentions the name of any particular Buddhist text prior to the onset of French occupation in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Given these limitations, how might we trace the historical contours of Buddhist literature in Cambodia? Three methods remain at our disposal. One, we can date compositions on the basis of linguistic clues, particularly rhyme patterns and lexical data.<sup>11</sup> Two, we can compare texts in Cambodian manuscripts to parallel compositions found in neighboring Tai cultures, since manuscripts from Laos and Lanna (northern Thailand), in particular, survive from as early as the late fifteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Three, we can connect literary styles, quotations, and titles mentioned in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century epigraphy to surviving manuscripts.

This essay uses the third method to present a comprehensive analysis of the Buddhist texts echoed, quoted, and listed in stone inscriptions between 1550 and 1750. Olivier de Bernon's study of a mid-nineteenth-century inscription that lists the names of texts donated to a monastery provides a compelling model for this method.<sup>13</sup> His analysis focuses on the exceptionally detailed Vatt Tā Tok inscription (K. 892), erected in BE 2400 (1857 CE)—only a few decades prior to the period in which most surviving manuscripts were copied. De Bernon is thereby able to reliably link titles listed in the inscription, including the accompanying enumeration of the number of fascicles per text, with extant manuscript collections. By contrast, inscriptional records from the sixteenth to eighteenth century are not nearly as detailed as K. 892 and are much farther removed in time from the oldest surviving palm-leaf manuscripts in Cambodia.

Despite the temporal gap and relative lack of detail, my reading of the epigraphic record shows that we can tentatively construct a list of some of the most important liturgical and homiletic Buddhist texts in Pali, Khmer, and Siamese prior to the nineteenth century. What is particularly remarkable is that nearly all of the texts mentioned in the inscriptions remained prominent in the Cambodian manuscript tradition up through the middle of the twentieth century. For the chanted liturgical texts that surface in the epigraphical record, including those in Pali as well as a few in Khmer and Siamese, nearly all remain current up to the present. Assessing the historical trajectory of the homiletic texts, typically transmitted in a bitextual Pali-Khmer format, is more complex. The dating of some of these compositions can be inferred through Lao and Lanna parallels,

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Siamese original in 1713 by a certain monk of the rank *mahāsāṅgharāj sugandhādhipatī* (Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 403–406). On this genre of narrative *kammaṭṭhān* texts, see de Bernon, “Le manuel des maîtres de *kammaṭṭhān*,” 40.

<sup>11</sup> This method was pioneered by Philip Jenner and Saveros Pou. For a summary of a strict application of this method and its findings, see Jenner, “The Relative Dating of Some Khmer CPA'PA\*.” For a critique of the limits of this method, see Pou, “La littérature didactique khmère.”

<sup>12</sup> The oldest known dated manuscript in Lanna has a colophon that reads 833 of the Lesser Era (*cullasakarāj/cūlasakarāj*), equivalent to 1471 or 1472 CE. The Digital Library of Northern Thai Manuscripts (DLNTM) code number is 030104030\_02 (<http://lannamanuscripts.net/en/manuscripts/3669>).

<sup>13</sup> de Bernon, “Circulation of Texts in Mid-Nineteenth Century Cambodia.”

some of which survive in manuscript form as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century. Though sermon texts mentioned in Middle-period epigraphy were largely cast aside in mid- to late-twentieth-century Cambodia in favor of modernist texts and extemporaneous styles, some continue to be used up to the present.<sup>14</sup>

The overall picture that emerges from sixteenth- to eighteenth-century epigraphy thus conforms to later evidence, including the lists provided in K. 892 from 1857 and the content of surviving manuscript libraries from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the total number of texts that appear in Middle-period inscriptions is small, these texts were probably only the most popular among hundreds of individual texts transmitted in post-Angkorian Cambodia. Indeed, among the roughly 1,500 distinct Buddhist compositions found in surviving palm-leaf manuscripts, the twenty-one represented in Middle-period inscriptions are among those with the largest number of extant copies.<sup>15</sup> All twenty-one of these Khmer, Pali, and Siamese texts survive in at least ten manuscripts, with many being found in dozens or even hundreds of exemplars. The conservative nature of the scribal tradition points to the likelihood that most of the texts known from epigraphical records are simply earlier recensions of those found in surviving manuscripts. This means that when we are reading Cambodian manuscripts from the early twentieth century, many of the texts in fact date from a considerably earlier period.

Most of the post-Angkorian inscriptions have already been carefully read by other scholars, including Mahā Bidūr Krassem, Saveros Pou, Uraisi Varasarin, and Vong Sotheara.<sup>16</sup> Previous research on the Middle-period epigraphical record has examined their window onto Buddhist literature, however. Several references to Buddhist texts have been misread, and many others missed entirely. My rereading of these documents, both from existing transcriptions and from rubbings of the inscriptions themselves, aims to rectify this. My analysis focuses directly on what the epigraphical record reveals about the history of the textual tradition, particularly when paired with evidence from colonial-era manuscript collections. In the following section, I summarize the contextual background and conceptual structure of Buddhist inscriptions between 1550 and 1750. Understanding the formulaic nature of these inscriptions makes their references to Buddhist

<sup>14</sup> On the transition to modernist sermons and printed books, see Hansen, *How to Behave*, 150–162. On the practice of traditional, manuscript-based sermon styles in contemporary Cambodia, see Kun Sopheap, “Les rituels accompagnant les prédications.”

<sup>15</sup> According to my preliminary analysis of FEMC materials, there are at least 311 distinct Khmer texts and over 390 distinct Pali-Khmer bitexts transmitted on long-format palm-leaf manuscripts (*sāstra*) in Cambodia. There is also an unknown number of shorter manuals and ritual texts in Khmer or in a mix of Khmer and Pali transmitted on leporellos (*krāmñ*) and on short-format palm-leaf manuscripts (*vāñ*). The index of de Bernon *et al.*, *Inventaire provisoire des manuscrits du Cambodge, Deuxième partie*, lists approximately 700 Pali titles in all formats, though some of these are merely alternative names for the same text. Further research is necessary to clarify the exact number of distinct titles of Buddhist texts in all languages in Cambodia.

<sup>16</sup> Mahā Bidūr Krassem, *Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor*; Pou [Lewitz], “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 2 et 3”; Pou [Lewitz], “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 4, 5, 6 et 7”; Pou [Lewitz], “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 1, 8, et 9”; Pou [Lewitz], “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16a, 16b, et 16c”; Pou [Lewitz], “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 et 25”; Pou [Lewitz], “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33”; Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 35, 36, 37 et 39”; Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 34 et 38”; Uraisi, *Cārik nāgar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nāgar*; Vong, *Silācārik nai prades kambujā samāy kañtal*.

literature more legible.

## CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE OF MIDDLE-PERIOD INSCRIPTIONS

Explicit citations of titles or passages from Buddhist texts are extremely rare in Cambodian epigraphy prior to the sixteenth century. Notable exceptions include the quotation of Pali Buddhist verses in a seventh- or eighth-century inscription from Angkor Borei,<sup>17</sup> a couple of titles of Mahāyāna sūtras and śāstras in a tenth-century Sanskrit inscription from Vat Sithor,<sup>18</sup> and a lone citation of a Sanskrit verse associated with Mātrceta in a late Angkorian inscription.<sup>19</sup> We know, both from descriptions in Sanskrit inscriptions and from the record of the Chinese emissary Zhou Daguan, that Cambodians used palm-leaf manuscripts as a medium for recording Brahmanical and Buddhist texts during the Angkorian period and likely well before.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that leporello formats were in use from an early period as well, though the record is less clear.<sup>21</sup>

Inscriptions are rare in Cambodia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>22</sup> The few stone records that do survive do not quote from or cite the titles of any known Buddhist texts.<sup>23</sup> The epigraphic record thickens in the middle of the sixteenth century and remains strong throughout the seventeenth before petering out again in the eighteenth. Almost all of the inscriptions of this period are testaments to Buddhist piety, documenting the restoration of images, the liberation of slaves, and other religious rites. Most of the surviving epigraphy is centered around Angkor Wat, consecrated as a Vaiṣṇava temple in the twelfth century. At least one branch of Khmer royalty made a decisive shift away from the Angkorian-era capital of Yaśodharapura in the fifteenth century in favor of sites to the southeast. During the sixteenth century, members of this royal house and other high-ranking dignitaries visited Angkor not to rule but to make merit and honor their ancestors. Two large bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat, left unfinished by the old rulers of Yaśodharapura, were completed at the behest of King Ang Cand in 1546.<sup>24</sup> For the next several centuries, Cambodian

<sup>17</sup> Skilling, “The Theravāsa Has Always Been Here.”

<sup>18</sup> Green, “The Vat Sithor Inscription,” 72.

<sup>19</sup> Skilling, “Namo Buddhāya Gurave (K. 888).” On a revised dating of this inscription to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, see Thompson, “Early Theravādin Cambodia.”

<sup>20</sup> Explicit references to the materials for palm-leaf manuscript production appear in the ninth-century inscriptions of Yaśovarman, including K. 279 (Goodall, “What Information can be Gleaned from Cambodian Inscriptions,” 153–156). The production of palm-leaf manuscripts was also noticed by Zhou Daguan in 1296–1297 (Pelliot, “Mémoires sur les coutumes du Cambodge,” 149; Harris, *A Record of Cambodia*, 53).

<sup>21</sup> Skilling suggests that the object upon which K. 888 is inscribed might be intended to represent a leporello (Skilling, “Namo Buddhāya Gurave (K. 888),” 109–111).

<sup>22</sup> The most prominent examples include K. 754, K. 489, K. 768, K. 144, and K. 177, most of which are datable only on paleographic grounds.

<sup>23</sup> There are, however, layers of intertextuality in these inscriptions that warrant further exploration. Ashley Thompson draws our attention to thematic parallels between the fourteenth-century inscription K. 144 and the seventeenth- or eighteenth-century text of the Khmer ritual poem *Hau brahṇ* (Thompson, *Engendering the Buddhist State*, 163–171).

<sup>24</sup> Cœdès, “Deux bas-reliefs tardifs d’Angkor Vat,” 239; Vickery, “Cambodia after Angkor,” 226–228.

elites, along with Siamese and Japanese Buddhists, made pilgrimages to Angkor Wat and other sacred sites of the classical period, transforming them into Buddhist sites of worship.<sup>25</sup>

The most voluminous records pertaining to this transformation are the dozens of inscriptions found on pillars and walls throughout the central galleries of Angkor Wat. Inscribed by anonymous lapicides working on behalf of royalty, government officials, and other wealthy patrons, forty of these inscriptions are commonly referred to as the “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor” (IMA). Most date from 1566 to 1706, along with an outlier from 1747 (IMA 39). Each inscription records a list of pious acts performed by pilgrims. Documents from this period reveal how Angkor Wat itself was known by various names in different languages, including *brah bisnulok* (Viṣṇuloka),<sup>26</sup> *brah nagaravāt/ brah aṅgar vatr* (Nagaravatta, i.e. Angkor Wat),<sup>27</sup> *mahānagar*,<sup>28</sup> *indapaṭṭhamahānagar*,<sup>29</sup> *brah nagar indriprās* (Indrapraṣṭha),<sup>30</sup> *jetabal* (Jetavana),<sup>31</sup> and *gion shōja* (祇園精舎, i.e. Jetavana-vihāra).<sup>32</sup> The IMA provide a detailed inventory of the Buddhist rituals performed in Cambodia between 1566 and 1747. Ordered from most to least common, the meritorious acts recorded include the following:

- sponsoring new buddha images or restoring old ones<sup>33</sup>
- liberating slaves<sup>34</sup>
- offering food, money, robes, or implements to the Saṅgha<sup>35</sup>
- fashioning cloth paintings (*brah paṭ*),<sup>36</sup> canopies (*bidān*),<sup>37</sup> and banners (*dan*)<sup>38</sup>
- sponsoring family members or oneself to be ordained as monks or nuns<sup>39</sup>
- celebrating lifecycle or calendrical rituals<sup>40</sup>
- copying palm-leaf manuscripts<sup>41</sup>
- inviting monks to chant or recite sermons<sup>42</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Thompson, “Pilgrims to Angkor,” 108–119; Abdoul-Carime, “Au-delà de la représentation d’Angkor Vat,” 61–72.

<sup>26</sup>IMA 2.

<sup>27</sup>IMA 17/27

<sup>28</sup>IMA 36

<sup>29</sup>IMA 37

<sup>30</sup>IMA 22

<sup>31</sup>K. 1006; see Vickery, “L’inscription K 1006 du Phnom Kulên,” 81.

<sup>32</sup>Yoshiaki, “The World’s Oldest Plan of Angkor Vat,” 50.

<sup>33</sup>IMA 1, 2, 4, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16b, 16c, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38.

<sup>34</sup>IMA 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16a, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 30, 32, 33, 35, 37.

<sup>35</sup>IMA 4, 6, 10, 12, 13, 17, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39.

<sup>36</sup>See Roveda and Yem, *Preah Bot*.

<sup>37</sup>See Siyonn, *Pidan (Bitān) in Khmer Culture*.

<sup>38</sup>IMA 10, 12, 13, 18, 19, 23, 26, 30, 31, 32, 37.

<sup>39</sup>IMA 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 37, 39.

<sup>40</sup>IMA 3, 16, 27, 31, 37, 39.

<sup>41</sup>IMA 4, 19, 30, 32, 34, 35.

<sup>42</sup>IMA 12, 26, 34, 37, 39.

- restoring the towers or other parts of Angkorian temples<sup>43</sup>
- planting bodhi trees<sup>44</sup>
- erecting four-faced towers (*prāsād*), *ceṭiya*, vihāra, or other religious buildings<sup>45</sup>
- forming sand stūpas<sup>46</sup>
- gilding buddha images<sup>47</sup>
- offering one's own hair to make lacquer for buddha images<sup>48</sup>
- interring relics<sup>49</sup>
- establishing sīmā boundaries<sup>50</sup>
- taking the precepts or practicing meditation<sup>51</sup>
- sponsoring public works such as bridges, wells, ponds, or roads<sup>52</sup>

Nearly all of the remaining inscriptions from the mid-sixteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries present analogous records of acts of merit, including K. 82 at Wat Nokor, Kampong Cham province;<sup>53</sup> K. 27 and K. 39 in Takeo province;<sup>54</sup> K. 261 at Wat Athvea, Siem Reap;<sup>55</sup> K. 264 at Pre Rup, Siem Reap;<sup>56</sup> K. 285 and K. 465 at Phnom Bakheng, Siem Reap;<sup>57</sup> K. 715 at Phnom Kulen, Siem Reap;<sup>58</sup> and K. 805 and K. 891 in Pursat province.<sup>59</sup>

The IMA and other inscriptions from this period all follow the same formula. They almost always begin with a brief benediction (Sanskrit *maṅgala*) and announcement of the date, given in the Śaka era.<sup>60</sup> This is often followed by a list of the names of those present as witnesses, including

<sup>43</sup> IMA 2, 3, 29, 34, 38.

<sup>44</sup> IMA 1, 4, 29, 31.

<sup>45</sup> IMA 4, 6, 31.

<sup>46</sup> *bun bhnaṃ khsāc'* or *sān vālukacetiy*; see Gabaude, *Les ceṭiya de sable*; IMA 31, 32, 37.

<sup>47</sup> IMA 4, 17

<sup>48</sup> IMA 2; Pou, "Textes en khmer moyen. Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 2 et 3," 104.

<sup>49</sup> IMA 3.

<sup>50</sup> IMA 4.

<sup>51</sup> IMA 2.

<sup>52</sup> IMA 31.

<sup>53</sup> *vatt nagar pā jāy*; Filliozat, "Une inscription cambodgienne en pāli et en khmer de 1566;" Thompson, "Mémoires du Cambodge," 403–406; Vong Sotheara, *Silācārīk nai prades kambujā samāy kaṅtāl*, 83–101.

<sup>54</sup> Khin, "L'inscription de Vatta Romlok K 27;" Pou, "Inscriptions khmères K. 39 et K. 27;" Vong, *Silācārīk nai prades kambujā samāy kaṅtāl*, 103–108, 157–166.

<sup>55</sup> Pou, "Inscriptions en khmer moyen de Vat Athvea (K. 261)."

<sup>56</sup> Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, I, 36–39.

<sup>57</sup> Khin Sok, "Deux inscriptions tardives du Phnom Bakhèñ, K 465 et K 285;" Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, I, 20–27; Vong Sotheara, *Silācārīk nai prades kambujā samāy kaṅtāl*, 145–156.

<sup>58</sup> Khin, "L'inscription de Praḥ Thom du Kulèn K 715;" Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, I, 28–31.

<sup>59</sup> Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, I, 40–46.

<sup>60</sup> Seventy-eight or seventy-nine years behind the corresponding CE date, depending on the month.

high-ranking Buddhist monks as well as laypeople, or simply the name of donors, many of whom are women. The inscriptions then list all of the meritorious acts performed, as detailed above. Many examples, particularly those connected with the liberation of slaves, follow this list with a stereotyped curse upon those who would disrupt the pious acts.<sup>61</sup> Such imprecations implore the buddhas of the future, “as numerous as grains of sand,”<sup>62</sup> to refrain from teaching or saving (*pros*) such violators. Some inscriptions of this period then conclude with an aspiration to achieve various boons in the future for oneself,<sup>63</sup> including extraordinary human qualities, heavenly rebirths, the opportunity to meet Maitreya Buddha, and even buddhahood. These wishes, as well as the entire five-part date-witnesses-acts-curses-wishes formula that contains them, are known in Middle Khmer as *satyapranādhān* (“solemn vows” or “truthful aspirations”).<sup>64</sup>

IMA 11, a short inscription from 1628, neatly illustrates how this basic formula, minus the final wishes, fits together:

[Date]<sup>65</sup>

May there be prosperity and overwhelming victory! In 1550 [of the Śaka era], tenth of the decade, year of the dragon, on the thirteenth waxing day of Visākha, a Monday [equivalent to May 15, 1628 CE],

[Witnesses]

there was a gathering of [the senior monks] *anak* Braḥ Dharmmakkhitti *mahāsāgharāj pūbitr*, *anak* Pūrapañā, *anak samtec* Braḥ Pañājet, *anak* Ammm, and *anak* Ppañādassī.<sup>66</sup> All of these monks served as witnesses and testaments to *cau* Odaiysmat and *nān* Māh who, with hearts filled with faith,

[Acts]

sponsored three buddha images, one in gold, one in silver, one in lead, to be

<sup>61</sup> Such curses have a long history in Cambodia. For Pre-Angkorian and Angkorian examples, see Chhom, “Le rôle du sanskrit dans le développement de la langue khmère,” 158–191.

<sup>62</sup> *braḥ buddh ampāl khsac*; de Bernon, 2001, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Or to share with others; Pou, “L’offrande des mérites dans la tradition khmère,” 404–405.

<sup>64</sup> Pou, “Les inscriptions modernes d’Angkor Vat,” 119–129; Thompson, “Mémoires du Cambodge,” 180.

<sup>65</sup> Items in square brackets are not in the original text; I have added them for clarity. My translation is based on Urasri Varasarin’s diplomatic edition of the inscription in Urasri Varasarin, *Carik nagar vāt samāy hlān braḥ nagar*, 59–60. For an alternative translation in Thai, see Urasri Varasarin, *Carik nagar vāt samāy hlān braḥ nagar*, 153–154; for French, see Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16a, 16, et 16c,” 224–225.

<sup>66</sup> As in many of the IMA texts, the Pali titles of the monks are challenging to interpret. It is tempting to standardize them to Dhammakitti, Pūrapañā, Paññājetṭha, Amara, and Paññādassī, respectively. *Mahāsāgharāj pūbitr* would be spelled in modern Khmer as *mahāsāṅgharāj pūbitr*. For lists of monastic titles in this period, see Mahā Bidūr Krassem, *Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor*, 202–206; and Vong, *Silacarik nai prades kambujā samāy kantāl*, 50–51.

consecrated in the Thousand Buddha gallery [of Angkor Wat], and liberated two slaves, one named *cauv* Kissisūr and the other *me* Nañ, to become free persons.

[Curses]

Should anyone, whether they be our brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, grandsons, or granddaughters, announce a motion to enslave these two again, may the buddhas who awakened in the past, as numerous as grains of sand, and the buddhas who will awaken in the future, [likewise] as numerous as grains of sand, never save such people. May they be reborn in the five hells of immediate retribution for their next fifty million lives, and may [the buddhas] never release them from those hells.

In spite of such formulaic constraints, these documents unveil much about the social structure, ideological concerns, and Buddhist practices of Middle Cambodia. In the present essay, my focus is squarely on the evidence these inscriptions furnish for understanding Buddhist literature during this period. I identify ten inscriptions between 1550 and 1750 that shed light on Buddhist texts, including nine from Angkor Wat (IMA 4, 12, 17, 31, 32, 34, 37, 39) and one from the nearby Angkorian temple of Pre Rup (K. 264). Clues for uncovering Middle-period Buddhist literature generally surfaces in the “acts” and “wishes” portions of the inscriptions. The evidence I highlight falls into three categories: 1) the distinctive literary style of Pali-Khmer bitexts, 2) direct and modified quotations of known works, and 3) titles of ritual and preaching texts known from the manuscript tradition. When considered in concert, these three forms of evidence provide a rich record of Cambodian Buddhist texts from this period, providing secure links between more recent manuscripts and considerably older inscriptions.

## EVIDENCE FOR PALI-KHMER BITEXTS

One of these Middle-period inscriptions, IMA 32 of 1688 CE, includes an extensive passage composed as a Pali-Khmer bilingual text, or “bitext.” The bitextual style dominates the Khmer manuscript tradition as well as related corpora surviving in contemporary Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand, particularly among verse and prose texts for public sermons as well as scholastic treatises for private study.<sup>67</sup> The Pali-Khmer passage in IMA 32 confirms the use of this mode of Buddhist composition in Cambodia during the seventeenth century. In this section, I discuss this inscription in its local and regional context and provide a detailed reading of its contents and style. The presence of a relatively mature Pali-Khmer bitext in this period allows us to connect physical manuscripts of bitexts that survive from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with their probable

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<sup>67</sup> For details on the structure and function of bitexts in the region, see Walker, “Indic-Vernacular Bitexts from Thailand.”

dates of composition in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.

The bitextual passage of IMA 32 is linked to broader regional and historical trends. Indic-vernacular bitexts were the dominant form of Buddhist writing across most of mainland Southeast Asia from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, from Cambodia all the way to Yunnan. Their roots extend even earlier, with isolated examples in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka stretching back to the second half of the first millennium.<sup>68</sup> Bitexts of this type combine portions in Pali or Sanskrit with corresponding portions in a local vernacular, including Burmese, Khmer, Khün, Lanna, Lao, Lü, Mon, or Siamese. The Indic and vernacular portions may be combined in a phrase-by-phrase (interphrasal) or line-by-line (interlinear) format to form a bitextual whole. Southeast Asian bitexts may be tailored for philological, exegetical, homiletic, or poetic purposes. No matter the format, Indic-vernacular bitexts from the region follow a shared set of technical conventions. These include methods for parsing, amplifying, rearranging, annotating, and glossing Indic texts to make them legible to vernacular readers.

In Cambodia, there are hundreds of examples of bilingual inscriptions but extremely few epigraphical examples of interphrasal or interlinear bitexts. Bilingual Sanskrit-Khmer inscriptions from the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian periods are particularly common. In most cases, the Sanskrit and Khmer portions diverge in both content and style. Chhom Kunthea demonstrates that a few inscriptions from the late Angkorian period differ from most other bilingual inscriptions in Cambodia in that the Sanskrit and Khmer portions convey the same content.<sup>69</sup> These inscriptions are especially important for understanding how Angkorian writers conceived of the semantic and syntactic dimensions of translating between Sanskrit and Khmer.

One of these inscriptions, K. 484, features a hallmark technique of later Indic-vernacular bitexts: using Khmer particles to systematically mark morphological features of Sanskrit or Pali, including case, number, and mood.<sup>70</sup> Carved into the walls of the Buddhist temple of Phimeanakas in the late twelfth century, K. 484 is not a true bitext in that it lacks an interphrasal or interlinear presentation. Yet its use of vernacular particles mirrors some of the earliest surviving Pali-Mon, Pali-Burmese, and Pali-Siamese bitexts between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. The use of such particles in K. 484 is unprecedented in the Cambodian epigraphical corpus for both its extent and its consistency; no other inscription attempts such a literal translation from Sanskrit to Khmer.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> On the historical spread of bitexts, see Walker, “Bilingualism.”

<sup>69</sup> Chhom, “Le rôle du sanskrit dans le développement de la langue khmère,” 319–340.

<sup>70</sup> Transliterations and translations of this inscription are provided in Cœdès, “Une nouvelle inscription du Phimānākās,” 10–11; Pou, “L’inscription de Phimeanakas (K. 484),” 92–93; and Chhom, “Le rôle du sanskrit dans le développement de la langue khmère,” 333–334.

<sup>71</sup> The plural number (PL) is marked with *phon* (modern Khmer *phañ*) and the imperative mood (IMP) with *cura* (modern Khmer *cūr*). In addition, two cases, vocative (VOC) and accusative (ACC), are marked throughout the text with the particles *hai* and *nau*, respectively. For example, *vrahmamūla* (“O you whose base is Brahma”) is glossed as *hai ta mán teñ ta gi vrah vrahma* (“VOC [you] whose trunk is Lord Brahma”). *Dussvapnan* (“nightmarish dreams”) is rendered into Khmer as *nau svapna ta asaru* (“ACC ominous dreams”). Cœdès and Pou disagree as to whether *nau* should be understood as an accusative particle in this context; Cœdès treats it as such (“Une nouvelle inscription du Phimānākās,” 12) but Pou critiques this view, arguing that the use of *nau* in K. 484 is more akin to a topic marker (“une particule

Missing from the epigraphical record are documents that show how and when such Indic-vernacular bitexts developed in Cambodia between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. The first surviving document containing an interphrasal Indic-Khmer bitext does not appear until 1688. However, since the bitextual style of IMA 32 is already quite mature, we can assume that Cambodian authors developed bitextual techniques in parallel with their Tai-, Mon-, and Burmese-speaking neighbors between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, paving the way for inscriptions like IMA 32 and the vast array of bitexts preserved in the manuscript tradition.

In terms of its overall structure, IMA 32 differs only slightly from the paradigmatic example of IMA 11 presented in the previous section. It begins with an announcement of the date and a declaration of the lay and monastic witnesses present. It then details the primary meritorious act of a pious laywoman named Paen, namely the liberation of a slave:

subbhamastu sūstī sriy sabbhamaṅgul bahulacestā jaiy°ātirek 1609 nṅksatr  
chnāmm thoḥ khae māgg 7 rojj thñaiy 2 bārasārṅṅnā mangi is jamnumm anak samṅtaec  
mahāsaṅghakāmm pubitr nū anak samṅtaec braḥ pavarapaṅā pubitr nū anak dāv pubitr nū  
anak traiy e grahas sot mān co cān nu braḥ saiyo nān ratn nu cau can nāṅnov nū nān nā\*n nān  
naev jīyo tu jīyo mimm is anakk damṅno ammpāl naeḥ syiṅ ta jā sāksiy sukkhiviṅṅṅṅ nai nān  
paen mān citr kāttamlā sārdhdhā mok laeṅ khṅṅṅ 1 oyo frvvac jā brai prāmpi dis it ppi cir  
bol ley<sup>72</sup>

May there be prosperity, good fortune, glory, and all manner of blessings, majestic might and supreme victory! In 1609 [of the Śaka] era, year of the rabbit, the seventh waning day of Mārga, a Monday, there was a gathering of Venerable *anak samṅtaec* Mahāsaṅghakāmm, Venerable *anak samṅtaec* Pavarapaṅā, Venerable *anak* Dāv, and *anak* Traiy, along with the

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conjunctive qui annonce ‘la matière’), functionally equivalent to the Middle Khmer topic marker *naru* (“L’inscription de Phimeanakas (K. 484),” 100). From my perspective, both positions are correct. *Nau* is clearly used as a standard marker for Sanskrit and Pali accusatives, both in K. 484 and throughout the history of later Indic-Khmer bitexts (where its modern spelling is *nu*). At the same time, the function of *nau* in K. 484 is best understood as a topic marker rather than a particle that highlights the direct object alone.

<sup>72</sup> Here and in the following passages of IMA 32, my transcription is directly based on the estampage as replicated in Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 98–99. My reading of the inscription differs in several places from the published transliterations of Urasri Varasarin (*Cārik nagar vāt samāy blāni braḥ nagar*, 101–102) and Saveros Pou (“Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33,” 227–228), both of which perpetuate some of the same errors found in Mahā Bidūr Krassem, *Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor*, 78–81. To capture the orthographic particularities of Middle Khmer, I have adopted the following conventions:

- u =  $\overset{\sim}{u}$  — Doubled *u*, usually with the assumed phonetic value of *a* =  $\overset{\sim}{a}$ , but also sometimes *u* =  $\overset{\sim}{u}$
- œ =  $\overset{\sim}{œ}$  — Orthographically distinct from *ö* =  $\overset{\sim}{ö}$  though presumably phonetically identical
- í =  $\overset{\sim}{í}$  — Diacritical *r* or *rapād*
- ń =  $\overset{\sim}{ń}$  — Diacritical *ń*, as opposed to *trisābd\** ( $\overset{\sim}{x}$  =  $\overset{\sim}{x}$ )
- \* =  $\overset{\sim}{*}$  — *Daṅdagbat*, often in medial position in Middle Khmer, with various phonetic functions, some overlapping with *samyog saṅṅā* ( $\overset{\sim}{\circ}$  =  $\overset{\sim}{\circ}$ )
- ° = — a subscript appended to a vowel, used in place of a final consonant, as in  $\overset{\circ}{g}$  = *damṅno* or  $\overset{\circ}{j}$  = *heyo*

laypeople *co* Cān, *brah* Saiy°, *nān* Ratn, *cau* Can, *nā*[ñ] Nov, *nān* Naev, *jjy*°Tu, and *jjy*° Mimm. All of these people served as witnesses and testaments to *nān* Paen, whose heart was free from clinging and shined with clear faith, as she released a slave to become a free person in all eight directions, not to be taken into bondage again.

Instead of proceeding to curses, as in IMA 11, IMA 32 continues with Paen's aspirations. The aspiration section is divided into several parts. The first is a stock aspiration, found in several other inscriptions, written in Khmer prose but with an extremely elevated diction consisting almost entirely of Indic-inspired terms:

naeḡgi roḡ tribitr succaritt sārddhā mahāvīpulaṭṭarek ekkārāttā pramojoti paṅkujj  
succarit vinabindh ācinatriṇi piti mānoḡñ cabhiroc sugaṇḡdhar pavarasarambhassābhilūṅkit  
vikṡisontar pavarapadamābhā mahāattisai kraī sumai samahutti mahotamm sam  
asaṅghārik vācī sityāaddhisthāṅ praṇidhāṅ nai nān paen krāpp thvāy paṅgam pranam dūl  
l-aṅ dhūli braḡ sriy varapādayuggul vimul bhicinatraiy nai samtaec braḡ sī sākyāmaṅi braḡ  
sriy gotamṅ braḡ kaṅmrataeṅ yeṅ stec thkceṅ nū aṭṭhataravarasiddhamuṅgal ambal no lāy  
lākkh kuṅ cak anā\*k anār bibār saḡār ā\*c nāmm satv phoṅ chloṅ laeṅ vaḡhasaṅsār smceḡ  
pravāl mahānubvasramudd bol mun ḡi kiles daṅṅ° bāndh hā ray bhuvv jāti kantāl sārṅṅnā  
naiy°

What follows is the truthful resolve and fervent aspiration (*satyādbiṡṡhāṅ praṅidhāṅ*)<sup>73</sup> of *nān* Paen: born of faith made triply pure through [physical, verbal, and mental] actions (*tribidh sucarit saddhā*), it is vast, peerless, exceptional, unflappable (*mahāvīpulaṭṭarek ekaggatā*). It beams, radiant with joy, a jewel among mud-born blossoms (*pramojajoti paṅkujaratn*). Subtle, yet thrice blissful beyond thought, it pleases and charms, adorned by the delight of fragrant scents and tastes (*renubindu acintyatrayaṅṅṅi mānoḡñ abhirocān sugaṇḡdhar pavarasā somanassābhilāṅkiṅ*). Blooming in full beauty, it shines as bright as the best of lotuses (*vikasitasundar paramapadumābhā*). Supreme in its abundance, it arrives right at the auspicious hour, in all places equally, completely unprompted (*mahāṅisay kraī samay sumubutt mahottam samant asaṅghārikacitt*). [I, *nān* Paen,] bow in humble homage to the dust beneath the inconceivably pure feet of blessed Sākyamuni, glorious Gotama Buddha, our Lord and Venerable Master. His sacred soles gleam with the one hundred and eight auspicious marks, rounded into wheels—how precious, how vivid, how lovely! [The Lord, our final refuge, likened to an immense vessel, fashioned from jewels, is]<sup>74</sup> capable of ferrying all beings across the cycle of *saṅsāra*, comparable to the vast expanse of the salty ocean, that is to

<sup>73</sup> I provide standardized spellings of the many hybrid Indic-Khmer compounds in this passage, which differ from those presented in Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33,” 226–230.

<sup>74</sup> The key phrase *braḡ aṅḡ jā baṅṅnāk’ trōy trāṅ rōbān saṅbau ratn raṅ uttuṅ samāṅṅ nā nūv*, present in IMA 31 as *braḡ aṅḡ jā bvuṅṅnāk’ trōy trāṅ rōbān saṅbau ratn raṅ uttuṅ samāṅṅ n’ā nū* (transliterated from Ang Choulean, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 96), appears to have been omitted by the lapicide.

say, the [two] thousand five-hundred defilements of the desolate wilderness of life (*kiles san bān' hā ray bhab jāti kantār sārānā nai*).

Although these stock descriptions of aspiration and devotion do not appear in any extant manuscript text, their consistent presence in the epigraphical record suggest that they were either copied from inscription to inscription or were part of the Buddhist oral and/or liturgical literature of the period. Whatever their origin, they are not the private expressions of Paen but rather part of a common language of devotion from the period.

Before the final set of closing aspirations, the text of IMA 32 continues with a second, more detailed enumeration of Paen's good works:

nān paen mān citr kāt taṃmlā sārddhā cāp tœm aṃbi prāmvy dantap chnāmm  
cām toy nū samnān ambœ kusal phal pany aṃbi mun no luḥ tal chnām jā se sœpp se hey°  
mok gannā trā samnān sān braḥ buddhārrap mās aṅg 2 braḥ prāk 12 braḥ aṅg samnu  
aṅg 1 braḥ silā aṅg 1 braḥ devvathārūv aṅg 1 braḥ padd aṅg 1 kāt duṅ 9 phtān 3 klas 1 sān  
bhnam bāndh byir toṅ bhnam 5 byir toṅ paṃpūs kūn 9 toṅ sān kāmbi 5 phluṅ traicivar 5  
vaḍhathbun 40 sān bhñiy° randā khñuṃ thvāy° pujā saṃtaec braḥ sirattatrai matoṅ naeḥ  
hoṅ | naeḥ hoṅ ambœ kusal phal puny anak nān paen daṃñ° aṃmpāl naeḥ hoṅ |

[I], *nān* Paen, gave rise to a heart of renunciation and clear faith from the age of sixteen, marked with the accumulation of meritorious acts from then all the way up to the present age of forty-four, as enumerated as follows: [I] sponsored two gold buddha images, one lead buddha image, one stone buddha image, one cinnamon-wood buddha image, and one painting on cloth; cut the cloth for nine pennants and three parasols; sponsored one thousand [small] sand stūpas twice and five [large] sand stūpas twice; ordained my children nine times; sponsored five manuscripts; anonymously gave triple robes five times and waistbands forty times; and sponsored a scaffold for fireworks. As for these meritorious actions performed by [me], *nān* Paen, I humbly offer them, once and for all, to the Lord, the glorious Triple Jewel. These are all of the meritorious acts performed by *nān* Paen.

Unlike the stock formula that precedes it, this passage is personal and autobiographical, narrating Paen's life as an accumulation of pious acts. The passage of twenty-eight years is told not through marriage and childrearing, or even ranks and titles, but rather through the dense materiality of robes and icons, stūpas and scaffolds.

In the closing portion of the inscription, IMA 32 moves away from the autobiographical material through a bitextual Pali-Khmer prayer. The precise wording of this passage has not yet been found in other texts, so we cannot easily determine whether it is unique to this inscription or borrowed from elsewhere. What is clear, however, is its status as a Pali-Khmer bitext, the earliest such datable example to surface in Cambodia. In my presentation of the passage below, I mark the Pali words in bold, with regularized versions following in brackets:

**āhaṃ** [ahaṃ] ri añ khñuṃṃ **namāmi** sraec thvāy° paṅgam pranaṃṃ **sirasā** tā\*k  
 lœ thpūn **dine2** [dine dine] sabv2 thñaiy **kālaṃ** ai ta kāl hoñ | **okāssa** [okāsa] pubitr hey°  
 hetu tek tejaḥ tapāḥ nai ambe kusal phal puny khñuṃṃ daṃṃ° ampāl naeḥ | **dhibvasampatti**  
**puripannāṃ** [dibbasampatti paripuṇṇā] pubitr hey° sūm khñuṃṃ pān svoy° saṃmpāt  
 daṃṃ° pi<sup>75</sup> prākāry noḥ mvay gī saṃmpāt mahācakkabattarāj mān riddhi aṃnāc āj drūn nū  
 dassabittarājadhārm daṃṃ° 10 gorobv Ṛ tae dān niñ sīl noḥ sabv2 jāt kuṃṃnœt hoñ |  
 mvay gī sampāt devatā nov nā svvaṅg nāy prasetṭh thlā thlai kraiy laeñ devatā phoñ daṃṃ°  
 hlāy | mvay sampāt nirbāṇ ta jā sthāṇ prœm prās nirāss laeñ jāt jārā m"ar noḥ dieñ prākut  
 hoñ | **sañsāranto** doḥ yo pi khñuṃṃ niñ andol mok yon yok kaṃnet œet ai ta bhūṃṃ bhuv  
 mandal aṃṃbul nūv vattasañsār nā2 ktī **mahāpañāṃ** [mahāpaññā] sūm khñuṃṃ mān  
 prājñā thlā thlai vaiy moḥhimā tūc braḥ mahānāggasen hoñ | **puripannāṃ** [paripuṇṇā]  
 pubitr hey° sūm yeñ khñuṃṃ pān luḥ saṃriddhi tūc ktī prāthnā cit cintā naiy° khñuṃṃ hoñ

I NOM I bow bow down low, with my cupped palms **with my head** raised above  
 my head **each day** each and every day **at the proper time** LOC at the proper time. **Permit**  
**me!** Venerable VOC, on account of the blazing potential of all of these virtuous deeds  
 of mine and their good karmic fruits, **the divine attainments fulfilled** venerable VOC, I  
 humbly wish to achieve the three attainments: first, the attainment of a universal monarch,  
 including majestic power and the ability to uphold all ten royal principles, respectfully  
 attending only to charity and virtue in every birth; second, the attainment of a deity in  
 heavenly realms to come, with a marvelous splendor that bests all other gods; and third,  
 the attainment of Nibbāna, the realm of bliss, permanent and true, completely freed from  
 birth, illness, and death. **Transmigrating** even if I should continue to wander, taking birth  
 in various realms in the cycle of birth and death, **great intelligence** I humbly wish to be  
 endowed with special and swift intelligence, just like Mahānāgasena; **fulfilled** may I achieve  
 success in complete accordance with the wishes of my heart.

There are numerous remarkable features of this closing set of aspirations. Like the twelfth-century inscription of K. 484 mentioned above, the vernacular portion uses several specialized particles to mark Indic grammatical features such as case, including *ri* (modern Khmer *rī*) for the nominative case (marked in the translation as NOM), an accusative used in a locative sense (LOC), and a stock phrase (*pubitr hey°* [modern Khmer *pabitr öy*]) adopted to mark an explicit or implied vocative (VOC). Unlike K. 484, however, this passage from IMA is a true interlinear bitext, with each of the ten Pali phrases followed by glosses in Khmer. As in almost all Indic-vernacular bitexts in Southeast Asia, the Pali portions of the text are arranged in an order that suits the syntax of Khmer, rather than vice versa. Following a regional pattern, the Pali phrases always precede their Khmer counterparts, and as such the Pali serves to provide the backbone of the entire passage. At the same time, the Pali portions could be removed without violating the semantic meaning

<sup>75</sup> On the estampage (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 99), a small vertical line beneath this word makes it look like *pui* instead of *pi*, though it is not clear to me if this is intentional on the part of the lapicide.

communicated by the text or the integrity of the Khmer syntax.

Taken together, these features make the closing passage of IMA 32 a relatively advanced Indic-vernacular bitext, suggesting that interlinear Pali-Khmer compositions had already existed for several centuries before its first epigraphic appearance here in 1688. As in many bitextual compositions found in later Khmer manuscripts, while the Pali portions are dispensable, the Khmer portions are not. For the first sentence, the Pali is complete and semantically comparable to the Khmer, if rather unidiomatic: *ahaṃ namāmi siraṣā dine dine kalam* (“I bow with my head each day at the proper time”). For the remainder of the passage, however, the Pali cannot stand on its own: *okāsa dibbasampatti pariṇṇā saṃsāranto mahāpañña pariṇṇā* (“Permit me! The divine attainments fulfilled... transmigrating... great intelligence... fulfilled”). Either phrases in the Pali source have been omitted, or, more probably, no such source existed in the first place; the Pali was composed expressly for the sake of the bitext. In other words, the entire passage was conceived as an interlinear Pali-Khmer composition. Here, the bitext is less a philological tool and more an aesthetic vehicle for the ritual articulation of a prayer.<sup>76</sup>

This stylistic deployment of the norms of Indic-vernacular bitexts is common in the Pali-Khmer Buddhist prose texts that make up the bulk of the surviving manuscript tradition. It is the dominant compositional style of all thirteen of the sermon texts cited in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century inscriptions. Its appearance in IMA 32 in 1688 is almost certainly not the first adoption of this region-wide form in the Cambodian context, but rather the irruption into the epigraphic record of an already well-developed set of techniques in exegetical and homiletic contexts. Nevertheless, the distinctive style and secure dating of this inscription allows us to state with confidence that Pali-Khmer bitexts were part of the toolkit of Cambodian Buddhist writers by the end of the seventeenth century, if not well before.

## QUOTATIONS OF PALI AND KHMER TEXTS

Direct quotations of Buddhist texts are rare in Middle-period inscriptions. All examples known to me are entirely in Pali or Khmer, with no bitextual examples among them. Though they were largely ignored or unrecognized in prior studies, such explicit quotes from known Buddhist texts are extremely valuable for understanding what compositions were current for Middle-period authors. In this section, I detail quotations of one Khmer and two Pali texts from four documents inscribed on the walls of Angkor Wat during the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries. While a single quotation cannot prove that a given text was especially popular in this period, the fact that all three quoted texts continue to be cited and recited up to the present points to their widespread

<sup>76</sup> As observed by Saveros Pou, this passage is also composed in a kind of rhyming prose known in Khmer as *r'ay kaev* (Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33,” 229). In practical terms, this means an abundance of rhyming syllables in close proximity, such as *amnac aj, thlai kraij, pras nirass, thlai vaij*, etc. The use of rhyming prose is common in Khmer and Siamese bitexts; see Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 363–370; and Walker, “Indic-Vernacular Bitexts from Thailand,” 694–696.

appeal in Middle Cambodia.

The first quotation is quite brief and surfaces in the middle of IMA 4. Carved in 1488 of the Śaka era, corresponding to the final months of 1566 CE, IMA 4 is the oldest dated inscription among all of the IMA texts. In terms of the inscription's formulaic structure, the quotation in question is an aspiration in Pali, which appears after the names of the witnesses, the date, the acts of merit performed, and a series of curses, all in Khmer. In the inscription itself, the Pali aspiration appears on lines twelve and thirteen of face B. As is typical for the period, no spaces are included between the Pali words:

- 12) ... idammevadānaṃ  
13) sabbaññūtaññāṇampatthividhaṃsapaccayo hotu<sup>77</sup>

Studies of this inscription by Saveros Pou, Uraisi Varasarin, and Vong Sotheara all mistakenly follow the spacing first added by Mahā Bidūr Krassem in his 1938 edition of the IMA corpus, namely *idaṃ meva dānaṃ / sabbaññūtaññāṇaṃ paṭhavidhaṃ sapaccayo hotu*.<sup>78</sup> Not only is this reading ungrammatical, it also introduces the otherwise unknown Pali word *sapaccayo*. Pou provides a corrected reading—*idaṃ meva dānaṃ sabbaññūtaññāṇaṃ [sic] paṭividdhaṃ sapaccayo hotu*—but this causes more problems than it resolves.<sup>79</sup> Either way, however, the reading of the passage becomes clear when the proper spacing is restored:

idaṃ me'va dānaṃ  
sabbaññūtaññāṇampatthividhaṃsa paccayo hotu

This would read in standard Pali orthography as:

idaṃ me'va dānaṃ sabbaññūtaññāṇapaṭivedhassa paccayo hotu.

With the exception of the additional enclitic *eva* (*'va*), this is identical to a passage that first appears in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* commentary of the *Vessantara-jātaka*:<sup>80</sup> *idaṃ me dānaṃ sabbaññūtaññāṇappaṭivedhassa paccayo hotū'ti* (“May this gift of mine be a support for the attainment of omniscience” or “May this gift be a support for my attainment of omniscience”).<sup>81</sup> As Pou correctly

<sup>77</sup> Transcribed from Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 91.

<sup>78</sup> Mahā Bidūr Krassem, 1938, 15; Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 4, 5, 6 et 7,” 108–109; Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 37–38; Vong, *Silācārik nai prades kambujā samāy kantāl*, 137.

<sup>79</sup> Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 4, 5, 6 et 7,” 109. There is one unusual glyph in this passage of the inscription, namely *ṭṭhi*, which could be read equally plausibly as *ṭṭdhi* or *ṭṭhi*, as the subscript form of *dha* in IMA 4 is generally much more elongated than in this instance.

<sup>80</sup> Fausboll, *The Jātaka Together with Its Commentary*, vol. 6, 570.

<sup>81</sup> The latter translation is from Appleton and Shaw, 2015, 619. Though the spacing in her edition of the inscription is incorrect, Uraisi Varasarin’s translation of this passage is nevertheless extremely close: *kbā haiz dān nīz pēn pāccāy haiz kbāz parrlu sābbāññūtaññāṇ* (Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 147). Pou’s translation, on the other hand, is based on a mistaken analysis of *paṭhavidhaṃsa paccayo* as *paṭhavidhaṃ sapaccayo*: “Que ces dons soient pour moi la

points out, this Pali passage recalls similar vows found in Cambodian texts from the Middle period to the present. One such vow is a comparable aspiration for arhatship, as opposed to buddhahood, that appears several times in the *aṭṭhakathā* commentary to the Saṃyutta- and Aṅguttara-nikāya: *idaṃ me dānaṃ āsavakēkhabhāvahaṃ hotū'ti* (“May this gift of mine be conducive to the destruction of the cankers”).<sup>82</sup> This aspiration appears not only in contemporary chanting books but also in the colophons of leporello manuscripts.<sup>83</sup> Both the Pali vow in IMA 4 and this latter vow are direct quotations of Pali commentarial material, held up and repeated as ideal aspirations when giving a gift.

The presence of the buddhahood vow in IMA 4 tells us several things. One, it underscores the importance of aspirations for buddhahood in Middle-period Buddhist literature and practice.<sup>84</sup> Second, it suggests that some Cambodian Buddhists from this period were familiar with the Pali text of the commentary to the *Vessantara-jātaka*, or had at least received a textual tradition conversant in such commentarial texts. Third, it demonstrates an early instance of a prevailing pattern in Cambodian Buddhism, namely the borrowing of pericopes from other texts to express one’s own religious aspirations.

The direct quotations I explore in the remainder of this section conform to this latter pattern. The first quote is a modified form of a common Pali pericope for confession, found in both the Suttanta-piṭaka and the Vinaya-piṭaka:

accayo no, bhante, accagamā yathābāle yathāmūlḥe yathākusale... tesam no, bhante, bhagavā accayaṃ accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatim saṃvarāyā'ti.<sup>85</sup>

We transgressed, O Venerable One, foolishly, in confusion, and unskillfully... [when we performed such-and-such acts]. For these [acts], O Venerable One, may the Blessed One accept our transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future.

The various canonical instances of this pericope feature different phrases in the ellipsis. Towards the end of IMA 17, a similar phrase is inserted into this gap (here marked in bold):

59) ...acca

60) yonobhanteaccagamāyathābāloyathāmūlahoakusalaṃ

61) **daharakālebuddhadhammasaṅghaguṇaṃmayamañjanantisabvadosa**

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condition de l’Omniscience pénétrante” (Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 4, 5, 6 et 7,” 114).

<sup>82</sup> Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā CD-ROM (CSCD) edition of the Saṃyutta-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā, nidānasamyuttaṃ, 1 buddhavaggo, §3 paṭipadāsuttavannaṇā (<https://tipitaka.org/romn/cscd/s0302a.att0.xml>); CSCD Aṅguttara-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā, ekakanipāta-aṭṭhakathā, 5. paṇihitācchavaggavannaṇā, §42 (<https://tipitaka.org/romn/cscd/s0401a.att5.xml>).

<sup>83</sup> For a leporello example, see Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 730.

<sup>84</sup> For more on this theme, see Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 592–596.

<sup>85</sup> Haskett, *Revealing Wrongs*, 79; Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 576–577.

- 62) **khamatthameyaṃevampikaramhātesaṃnobbhantepiaccayatopatigga**  
 63) **ṇhentuayatimsavarāya...**<sup>86</sup>

The quoted portions in roman type only differ in minor ways from the standard pericope. Although Pou takes the final *akusalam* in line 60 as grammatically belonging to the frame that follows, I think it is best to emend this to *yathāakusale* (*yathā akusale*), the form found in every other instantiation of the pericope.<sup>87</sup> The distinctive portion about which faults are being confessed thus begins with *daharakāle*. I would punctuate this added portion as follows:

daharakāle buddhadhammasaṅghaguṇaṃ mayam na jānanti sabvadosa khamattha me yaṃ  
 evaṃ pi karamhā

Or in regularized Pali, with changes notated in brackets:

daharakāle buddhadhammasa[n̄]ghaguṇaṃ mayam na jān[āma] sab[ba]dosa[m] khama[t]ha  
 [no] yaṃ evaṃ pi kar[i]mhā<sup>88</sup>

This yields the following understanding of the whole passage:

We transgressed, O Venerable One, foolishly, in confusion, and unskillfully, when in our youth we did not know the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha; forgive us for all of our faults that we thus committed. For these [acts], O Venerable One, may the Blessed One accept our transgression as a transgression for the sake of restraint in the future.<sup>89</sup>

We must examine the full context of IMA 17 to appreciate the significance of the inscription's citation and modification of the canonical repentance pericope. The preceding Khmer passage is a long and complex sentence that explains the motivation for enouncing the absolution formula.

<sup>86</sup> Transcribed from Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 60.

<sup>87</sup> Pou, "Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 et 25," 165.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Pou's regularized version of the whole passage: *accayo no bhante accaggamā yathābāle yathāmuḷhe akusalam daharakāle buddhadhammasaṅghaguṇaṃ mayam na jānāma sabbodosaṃ khamathā no yaṃ evampi karimhā tesam no bhantepi accayam accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatimsaṃvarāyā* (Pou, "Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 et 25," 165).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Pou's translation of this passage: "Ô Vénérables! Nous avons commis des fautes, stupides et aveugles que nous sommes. Dans notre enfance, nous n'avons pas su reconnaître le mal, ni les mérites du Buddha, du Dhamma et du Saṅgha. Veuillez nous pardonner toutes ces fautes. Recevez douc la confession des péchés que nous avons commis, pour nous contraindre à l'avenir" (Pou, "Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 et 25," 169).

Again, there are no spaces in the inscription itself, so this crucial form of punctuation must be supplied by the editor when presenting a romanized text. My reading of this passage differs from Pou's and is closer, though not identical, to that of Uraisi Varasarin:

- 53)... pabitr mūyṇi yeñ khñuṃ andol dov mok ai ta bva  
 54) bbh rrañ chmār bvum sgāl amṃviy paraṃmajāt kreñ yeñ khñuṃ thveh gtiy  
 55) pramāt ānādar paraṃmmapabitr braḥ sātācārik kammrataeñ yeñ braḥ  
 56) sri ratn traīy toy nu kāyakaṃmm vacikaṃmm manokaṃmm kaṃdār toy  
 57) nu dvādassa-akusal citr babrit nu dvāsaṭṭhīdris tamis citudassa  
 58) cettasikākusal mūl akusalamūlā pi prākāryy pantāl jā  
 59) saggāvaraṇ maggāvaraṇ yeñ khñuṃ sūm nū braḥ gāthā roḥ neḥ...<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, O Lord, [since] we have transmigrated through worlds great and small, ignorant of previous lives, and [in those many lives] may have been heedless and disrespectful toward the Supreme Lord, the Teacher, Our Master, the Glorious Three Jewels, with acts of body, speech, and mind, tainted by the twelve unwholesome consciousnesses, directed by the sixty-two wrong views, darkened by the fourteen unwholesome mental factors, and rooted in the three unwholesome roots, causing obstacles for both heavenly rebirth and the [four] paths [that culminate in arhatship], we pray in accordance with the holy stanzas as follows: *accayo no, bbante...*

This reading of the passage evinces how the author of IMA 17 was intimately acquainted with categories from the Pali suttas and commentaries. The three unwholesome roots (greed, aversion, and ignorance) and the sixty-two wrong views are explained in the canon, the latter specifically in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*.<sup>91</sup> The twelve consciousnesses (*citta*) and the fourteen unwholesome mental factors (*cetasika*) are formulated as such in Anuruddha's scholastic compendium, the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*.<sup>92</sup>

The combination of a direct citation of the canonical repentance pericope as well as specific doctrinal ideas from other canonical and commentarial texts in Pali reveals much about the nature of Cambodian Buddhism in this period. First, this passage shows that some Khmer monastics and laypeople were well acquainted with Pali texts, even when not citing them directly. Second, it demonstrates the specific use of a Pali formula for repentance, one rooted in the canon but modified in various ways across Southeast Asia, including in later Cambodian manuscripts.<sup>93</sup> Third,

<sup>90</sup> Transcribed from Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 60; cf. Pou, "Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 et 25," 165; and Uraisi, *Cārikā nagar vāt samāy bhānī braḥ nagar*, 73.

<sup>91</sup> On this sutta and its commentaries, see Bodhi, *The All-Embracing Net of Views*.

<sup>92</sup> Bodhi, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, 32–40; 83–85.

<sup>93</sup> Walker, "Unfolding Buddhism," 584–585.

it exhibits how Cambodian Buddhists adapted existing Pali formulae for local doctrinal priorities not found in canonical texts.

The latter point is particularly evident in the Pali phrases added to the canonical pericope and the introductory passage in Khmer. One such added Pali phrase reads, “when in our youth we did not know the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and Sangha.” What does “when in our youth” (*daharakāle*) mean in this context? We can read it at face value as earlier in the present lives of the two donors, *cov* Jet and *nān* Sūs, perhaps before they had developed such strong faith in the Three Jewels. But the Khmer passage that introduces this formula offers a more expansive reading of *daharakāle*, namely early on in the donors’ multi-life careers as bodhisattas: “[since] we have transmigrated through worlds great and small, ignorant of previous lives, and [in those many lives] may have been heedless and disrespectful toward the Supreme Lord, the Teacher, Our Master, the Glorious Three Jewels.” Canonical versions of the Pali confession pericope are squarely focused on actions from the present life. IMA 17, perhaps borrowing from Mahāyāna modes of confession that explicitly invoke transgressions from previous lives,<sup>94</sup> extends the canonical pericope into a local Khmer context, in which sins from former births are likewise worthy of confession. This expansive use of Pali quotations highlights how Cambodians of this period skillfully adapted the translocal resources of the Buddhist tradition to local norms.

The final set of direct citations found in Middle-period inscriptions are in Khmer. These are several quotations and modifications of a single liturgical poem, which appear in IMA 31 (1684 CE) and IMA 38 (1702 CE). The 39-stanza poem in question is known by various names in contemporary Cambodia, including *Padum thvāy phkā*, “[chant for] offering flowers, [beginning with] ‘Lotus...’” or, less precisely, “Lotus Flower Offering.”<sup>95</sup> In some older manuscripts it is known as *Lpök padum*, “chanted poem [for offering] lotus [flowers].”<sup>96</sup> Despite the title, the text is not about lotus flowers at all, at least not real ones. The opening stanzas use the buds of a lotus as a simulacrum for one’s cupped hands in prayer, a common trope in Middle-period Khmer Buddhist texts alongside other corporeal offerings such as fingers in place of candles, eyes in place of lamps, and so on.<sup>97</sup> After this initial act of worship, the remainder of *Lpök padum* articulates an expansive vow to undertake the path of a bodhisatta and eventually achieve buddhahood.

Since the relationship between *Lpök padum*, IMA 31, and IMA 38 has been addressed in considerable detail elsewhere, what follows is only a brief summary.<sup>98</sup> Six stanzas from *Lpök padum* are directly quoted in the middle of IMA 31, making this inscription from 1684 the oldest

<sup>94</sup> On the differences between Mahāyāna modes of confession versus those found in the Pali canon, see Haskett, *Revealing Wrongs*, 175–176.

<sup>95</sup> For an audio recording, see Walker, “Stirring and Stilling.”

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, B.04.03.03 FEMC 95 (Vatt Vālukārām, Kampong Cham province) and FEMC 059 (Hun Sen Library, Royal University of Phnom Penh).

<sup>97</sup> See, for instance, Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 401–402.

<sup>98</sup> Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 624–651.

physical record of rhymed verse in Khmer.<sup>99</sup> This demonstrates that *Lpök padum* was likely extant in Khmer by the middle of the seventeenth century, if not before. The vow section of *Lpök padum* appears to be largely a translation of an eighteen-stanza bodhisatta vow in Pali. While the origin and dating of this prayer are uncertain, it appears as a colophon in some manuscripts of the *Hatthavanagallavibāravamsa*, a chronicle composed in Sri Lanka between 1236 and 1266.<sup>100</sup> IMA 38, dating to 1702 and previously recognized as the oldest verse inscription in Khmer, contains numerous stanzas that appear to be modified from or modeled after *Lpök padum*, namely stanzas 3–8, 16–22, 124, 126, and 141. IMA 31 and IMA 38 record the deeds of two separate figures, the senior monk *samtec* Braḥ Paravidū and the high-ranking dignitary Jayanand, respectively; the fact that both quote from or adopt portions of *Lpök padum* highlights the importance of this Khmer liturgical poem in late seventeenth-century Cambodia. As is the case for the two Pali quotations, the single Khmer text quoted in sixteenth- through eighteenth-century inscriptions continues to be intoned up to the present. *Lpök padum* remains a staple of the *smūtr* or Dharma song (*dharm pad*) tradition in contemporary Cambodia. Its dramatic, soaring melody was made famous by gifted twentieth-century performers such as Pālāt' Ūn.<sup>101</sup>

The IMA corpus displays an impressive degree of intertextuality, not all of which is accessible to us today. In addition to the three texts discussed in this section, there are several Khmer prose passages that recur across the corpus. Examples include the elaborate statements of faith found in many Middle-period inscriptions, such as the passage from IMA 32 cited above. No extant manuscripts or oral texts have yet emerged as possible sources for these pericopes, however. Without knowledge of such sources, we are blind to the full spectrum of texts available to Khmer Buddhists of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The brief quotes from Pali scriptures and Khmer poems discussed in this section open an important but narrow window on this period of Cambodian religious and literary history. In order to develop a more robust account of Middle-period Buddhist literature, I now turn to the titles of eighteen different Pali, Pali-Khmer, and Siamese liturgical and homiletic texts that surface in these inscriptions.

## TITLES OF PALI CHANTS, PALI-KHMER SERMONS, AND A SIAMESE POEM

The “acts” portion of Middle-period inscriptions, as discussed above, encompasses a wide range of meritorious activities. Two of the activities mentioned—copying palm-leaf manuscripts and inviting monks to chant or recite sermons—frequently cite the titles of specific texts, allowing us to sketch a picture of the most popular Buddhist texts of the mid-sixteenth through mid-eighteenth

<sup>99</sup> It is not the oldest inscription of a verse text in Khmer, however; that distinction belongs to the two non-rhymed, Sanskrit-style Khmer verses found in K. 173 from 974 CE (Chhom, *Le rôle du sanskrit dans le développement de la langue khmère*, 343–356).

<sup>100</sup> For the colophon, see Godalumbara, *Hatthavanagallavibāravamsa*, 33–34; on the date of this chronicle, see Gornall, *Rewriting Buddhism*, 55.

<sup>101</sup> Walker, “Samvega and Pasāda,” 271–272.

centuries. Copying palm-leaf manuscripts, or rather sponsoring (*sañ* or *sāñ*, “to construct”) their copying, is mentioned in seven Middle-period inscriptions, namely IMA 4 from 1566, IMA 19 from 1633, IMA 30 from 1633, K. 264 from 1684, IMA 32 from 1687, IMA 34 from 1696, and IMA 35 from 1698. Of these, only IMA 4 and IMA 34 mention the sponsorship of specific texts; the other five simply use a variant of *sāñ kambī* (modern Khmer *sāñ gambīr*, “to sponsor [the copying] of a manuscript”).<sup>102</sup> Inviting monks to chant or recite sermons is mentioned in six inscriptions, namely IMA 12 from 1628, IMA 26 from 1663, K. 264 from 1684, IMA 34 from 1696, IMA 37 from 1700, and IMA 39 from 1747. With the exception of IMA 26, which only includes the phrase *sūtr mman* (modern Khmer *sūtr mant*, “to chant incantations,” typically in the sense of “to recite protective and benedictive Pali texts”), these inscriptions list between two and eight specific titles. Half of these titles are mentioned more than once in the corpus; some appear on five separate inscriptions. All told, the epigraphical record reveals the names of eighteen texts that were likely popular between 1566 and 1747.

The texts mentioned in these Middle-period inscriptions fall into two categories: 1) texts for liturgical chanting, including one Siamese poem and four Pali texts based on canonical sources, and 2) scripts for sermons, including thirteen bitextual Pali-Khmer prose texts. All eighteen titles can be readily linked to texts transmitted on palm-leaf manuscripts during the colonial period. None of the texts mentioned are particularly rare, even in the decimated manuscript collections that survive up to the present. The epigraphical evidence thus demonstrates considerable continuity for both ritual and homiletic texts between the mid-sixteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. In this section, I take up each chant and sermon in turn, linking the epigraphic evidence to Cambodian manuscript collections. To widen the historical and regional scope of my analysis, I also connect the Cambodian data to relevant parallels in the Lao, Lanna, and Siamese manuscript traditions.

Five inscriptions between the mid-sixteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries mention the recitation of Pali liturgical texts. In all cases, the primary donor or donors are recorded as having “invited” (modern Khmer *nimant* or *ārādbanā nimant*) a group of monks to recite texts. This is understood as an act of merit on the part of the donor for several reasons: 1) the words of the Buddha are recited for the benefit of living beings, 2) the donors are present for and listen to this intoning of the Dharma, and 3) the monks involved are offered material gifts for their participation, including silver coins.<sup>103</sup>

The texts mentioned include some broad categories, including *paritta* (IMA 12, l. 13: *brah pūritā*) and *dibbamanta* (IMA 12, l. 13: *sūt dibbaman*; IMA 34, l. 22: *sūt brah dibvamutr*).<sup>104</sup> The first term clearly means Pali protective texts writ large, including the standard group of protective texts found

<sup>102</sup> For example, on line 10 of K. 264 we find *sāñ brah prak aṅg 2 phtān 1 kummbi 1* (Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, I, 37).

<sup>103</sup> For instance, IMA 37, l. 61–63, mentions the gift of one *slān* (*slāñ*, a small silver coin) each for the seventy novice monks who participate in a chanting ritual: *e iss anak sammner damñ° pāmñ°skul aniccā damñ° tā\*r noh trū sammner 70 sñ pragen aṅg 1 slān 1* (transcribed from Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 83; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 143).

<sup>104</sup> Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 61; 106.

in short-format palm-leaf manuscripts across Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand.<sup>105</sup> These collections are typically known by a local variant of the Pali term *bhānavāra* (“portions for recitation”), and contain a range of *paritta* and other commonly memorized liturgical texts, including excerpts from the Abhidhamma.<sup>106</sup> The second term, *dibbamanta* (“divine incantations”), is harder to decipher. It could simply function as an elevated term for *paritta* in this context, or it could refer to a specific five-title collection of protective chants known as *Dibbamanta* or *Mahādibbamanta* in Cambodia and Siam.<sup>107</sup> In addition to the broader terms *paritta* and *dibbamanta*, the inscriptions also mention two specific titles of canonical texts used as protective chants, namely the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and the *Mahāsamaya-sutta* (IMA 34, l. 22).<sup>108</sup> Both are popular *paritta* texts across the contemporary Theravāda world and extremely common in Southeast Asian manuscript collections.

A couple of other Pali liturgical texts are mentioned in the epigraphical record as well. The terms *tār*, *tār chlañ*, or *tār mātikā*, along with *paṇsukūl* or *paṇsukūl aniccā*, appear numerous times in IMA 37 and 39.<sup>109</sup> Both sets of terms remain in current use in Cambodia today. A *tār* ritual involves monks chanting to transfer merit to the deceased; the word *chlañ* (“to cross over”) in both Khmer and Thai can refer to the same rite.<sup>110</sup> The core texts chanted in the *tār* or *tār chlañ* ritual include the *mātikā* of the seven books of the Abhidhamma (*sattappakarāṇa*).<sup>111</sup> These chants are exceedingly numerous in Southeast Asian manuscript collections, including both *bhānavāra* collections on short-format palm-leaf manuscripts as well as leporellos for funerary rituals.<sup>112</sup> A *paṇsukūl* ritual is also a rite typically performed on behalf of the deceased.<sup>113</sup> During this ceremony, as they slowly remove

<sup>105</sup> For a Lanna example, see PNTMP (Preservation of Northern Thai Manuscripts Project) 030104046\_00 (<http://lannamanuscripts.net/en/manuscripts/4402>); for a Lao example, see PLMP (Preservation of Lao Manuscripts Programme) 06011404050\_01 (<https://www.laomanuscripts.net/en/texts/2899>); for a Siamese example, see PLMP 16100204050\_00 (<https://www.laomanuscripts.net/en/texts/2954>).

<sup>106</sup> For details on the content of such *bhānavāra* collections in Cambodia, see Walker, “Echoes of a Sanskrit Past,” 57–77.

<sup>107</sup> The latter interpretation requires that we understand phrases such as *sūt brah dibbamutr dhammacak mahāsūmayi* in line 13 of IMA 34 (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 100; Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nagar*, 106) as referring to the recitation of three separate texts, the [Mahā]dibbamanta, the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, and the *Mahāsamaya-sutta*. On *Mahādibbamanta* collections in Cambodia, see Walker, “Echoes of a Sanskrit Past,” 93–102.

<sup>108</sup> Samyutta-nikāya 56.11; Dīgha-nikāya 20.

<sup>109</sup> IMA 37, l. 58–59: *mūy sotth n'a kāl dhvæ puny chlañy brah kanlāh khae noh sñ tār mātīkā* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 80; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nagar*, 115); IMA 37, l. 70: *tār chlañ sñ brah mātīkā* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 80; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nagar*, 116); IMA 39, l. 59: *hæy° tā\*r chlañ* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 83; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nagar*, 143); IMA 37, l. 29 *ny°mundr prasāñ drañ pāñ-skūl* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 78; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nagar*, 113); IMA 39 l. 8, *nimantr anak brah sañgh drañ pāñ°skūl aniccā* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 81; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nagar*, 139); similar phrases occur on lines 52–53, 54, and 56 of IMA 39.

<sup>110</sup> Bizot, *Le don de soi-même*, 12.

<sup>111</sup> These texts and the contemporary instantiation of the traditional *tār* ritual are described in Lī Suvīr, *Puny tār bistar*. The term *sattappakarāṇa* itself surfaces as the name of a type of cloth banner created for use in rituals for transferring merit to the deceased in IMA 37, l. 43: *duñ sappakar* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 79; cf. Uraisi Varasarin, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlāñ brah nagar*, 114).

<sup>112</sup> Walker, “Echoes of a Sanskrit Past,” 60; Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 174–180; 913–916.

<sup>113</sup> It may be performed for the living as well (*paṇsukūl ras'*), in which case a different core Pali verse is used (Bizot, *Le*

a white shroud from the corpse, monks traditionally intone a Pali verse beginning with *aniccā vata saṅkharā*.<sup>114</sup> Thus the term *paṇsukūl aniccā* refers specifically to the recitation of this verse. In one passage from IMA 39, we learn that sometimes both the *aniccā* verse and the *mātikā* portions of the Abhidhamma are recited sequentially in a two-step *paṇsukūl* and *ṭar* ritual.<sup>115</sup> The inscriptions do not reveal the full extent of the texts recited at these merit-making ceremonies, but we can be confident that at least the *aniccā* verse and the *mātikā* or *sattappakarāṇa* were included. Thus these two texts join the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and the *Mahāsamaya-sutta* as four Pali chants for which the inscriptions provide unambiguous evidence.

The Middle-period epigraphical record also notes the presence of some thirteen different Pali-Khmer bitexts, all scripts for public sermons that remained current in colonial-era manuscript collections. Five of these compositions—*Abhidhamm 7 gambīr*, *Das jātak*, *Mahā vessantar jātak*, *Paṭham trās*, and *Dhammacakkappavattan sūtr*—are cited as the titles of manuscripts whose copying was sponsored by the named donors of the relevant inscriptions.<sup>116</sup> Eight additional compositions—*Māleyyadevatther*, *Mātugun*, *Saṅgāyanā grē 3*, *Ānisaṅs dan*, *Ānisaṅs brah*, *Ānisaṅs camlaṅ puny*, *Ānisaṅs phnuos*, and *Ānisaṅs brah dhamm gorab*—are cited as sermons that were actually recited in rituals sponsored by other named donors. Three of these bitextual sermons—*Abhidhamm 7 gambīr*, *Das jātak*, and *Mahā vessantar jātak*—are cited in lists of manuscripts offered as well as in lists of sermons performed.

The language the inscriptions use to describe the recitation of bitextual sermons is sometimes identical to that used in reference to Pali liturgical chants. Lines 10–11 of K. 264, for instance, simply read *oy sūt mātugun brah abbidhamm camlaṅ pun* (“[the donors] had [the monks] recite [the following sermons]: *Mātugun*, *Abbidhamm [7 gambīr]*, and [*Ānisaṅs camlaṅ puny*”).<sup>117</sup> Other inscriptions use the word *desanā* (“sermon; to preach a sermon”) instead of *sūtr* (“to chant,” from Old Khmer *svat*). For instance, lines 14–16 of IMA 12 read: *saṃtaeṅ dha dessānā brah amvidhamm kēn 3 mahājāt 2 ānnisā dan nisā brah camlaṅ pun nisā phnūs*<sup>118</sup> (“expounded sermons on the Dharma, [namely] three fascicles of *Abbidhamm [7 gambīr]*, two [fascicles] of *Mahā vessantar jātak*, *Ānisaṅs dan*, [*Ānisaṅs brah*, [*Ānisaṅs camlaṅ puny*, and [*Ānisaṅs phnuos*”).<sup>119</sup> Lines 59–60 of IMA 37 use a similar

*don de soi-même*, 33). On the contemporary performance of *paṇsukūl* rites, see Davis, *Deathpower*, 147–149.

<sup>114</sup> The verse appears in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, among other places in the Pali canon (Rhys Davids and Carpenter, *The Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. II, 157).

<sup>115</sup> IMA 39, l. 61–62: *e iss anak samṃner daṃṇṇ<sup>o</sup> pāṃṇṇ<sup>o</sup>skūl aniccā daṃṇṇ<sup>o</sup> tā<sup>\*r</sup>* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 81; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 139). This conforms with modern practice as well, in which there is considerable overlap between the texts recited for *paṇsukūl* and *ṭar*. See Bizot, *Le don de soi-même*, 9–37; Davis, *Deathpower*, 147.

<sup>116</sup> IMA 4, face A, line 13: *sān brah abbidhamm mahājāt* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 90; Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 36); IMA 34, l. 11–12: *sān is sutra dasajāt brah abbidhamm pratbamm brah dhammacakkh phoṅ* (Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 100; Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 106).

<sup>117</sup> Pou, *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, I, 37.

<sup>118</sup> Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 51; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 61.

<sup>119</sup> Saveros Pou and Olivier de Bernon read this passage differently, each finding only three, rather than four *ānisaṅs* sermons here (Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16a, 16b, et 16c,” 227; de Bernon, “La

formation: *desnā jā tēmm gī dhamm gurubb ca\*pp is brah māttagun mbālayi*<sup>o</sup> (“the preaching commenced with [*Anisaṅs*] *brah dhamm gorab* and finished with the complete *Māttagun* and *Māleyyadevatther*”).<sup>120</sup> Another passage in IMA 37 (line 69) emphasizes the act of listening on the part of the donors: *stāpp brah abhidhamm mbājāt* (“[they] listened to [sermons of] the *Abhidhamm* [7 *gambū*] and the *Mahā vessantar jātak*”).<sup>121</sup> Lines 63–64 of IMA 39, by contrast, emphasize the donors’ role in inviting monastics to give a sermon: *nimantr mahāsaṅgharāj silācāryya desnā brah mahājāt kēn 1* (“[they] invited the *mahāsaṅgharāja*, teacher of the precepts,<sup>122</sup> to preach one fascicle of the *Mahā vessantar jātak*”).<sup>123</sup> The combined evidence from these different inscriptions suggests that donors invited monks to recite specific sermon texts from palm-leaf manuscripts for an assembled group of laypeople to listen to, including the donors themselves. This picture accords with Kun Sopheap’s account of traditional preaching rituals in twentieth-century Cambodia, in which sermons are recited directly from a particular group of palm-leaf manuscripts, rather than being improvised extemporaneously.<sup>124</sup>

The thirteen bitextual sermons mentioned in the inscriptions can be linked fairly straightforwardly to compositions transmitted in palm-leaf manuscripts. Five of the sermons cited are *ānisaṅs*, compositions that articulate the “benefits” (Pali *ānisamsa*) of performing various meritorious acts.<sup>125</sup> While some monolingual Pali versions exist, these texts are primarily transmitted as Pali-vernacular bitexts in Southeast Asia. *Ānisaṅs dan*’ details the benefits of preparing various cloth banners for Buddhist ceremonies.<sup>126</sup> *Ānisaṅs brah* or *Ānisaṅs brah buddharūp* extols the rewards that accrue to those who sponsor the construction of buddha images in different materials.<sup>127</sup> *Ānisaṅs camlān puṇy* describes the benefits of dedicating the merit accrued through the sponsorship of Buddhist rituals and construction projects.<sup>128</sup> *Ānisaṅs phnuos* details the benefits of ordaining one’s family members or oneself as a monastic.<sup>129</sup> A Pali version of this text is preserved in the

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littérature des «avantages» (*ānisaṅs*),” 79). On this issue, see Walker, “Echoes of a Sanskrit Past,” 94–95, n. 50.

<sup>120</sup> Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 80; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 115.

<sup>121</sup> Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 80; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 116.

<sup>122</sup> Or “[possessed of the monastic title] *silācāryya/silācāryya*.”

<sup>123</sup> Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 83; cf. Uraisi Varasarin, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 143.

<sup>124</sup> Kun, “Les rituels accompagnant les prédications,” 99–103.

<sup>125</sup> de Bernon, “La littérature des «avantages» (*ānisaṅs*)”; Skilling, “Ānisamsa.”

<sup>126</sup> IMA 12, l. 15; de Bernon, “La littérature des «avantages» (*ānisaṅs*),” 89; Gabaude, *Les ceṭṭiya de sable*, 142–167. Three such manuscripts are found in published FEMC catalogs: 002-PP.00.04.02.III.6; 040-PP.02.06.02.III.6; and b.124.III.6.

<sup>127</sup> IMA 12, l. 15; IMA 39, l. 66; de Bernon, “La littérature des «avantages» (*ānisaṅs*),” 89. Five manuscripts appear in published FEMC catalogs: 113-A.04.03.02.III.6; 114-A.04.03.02.III.6; 048-A.10.09.02.III.6; b.267.III.6; and b.347.III.6.

<sup>128</sup> IMA 12, l. 16; K. 264, l. 11; de Bernon, “La littérature des «avantages» (*ānisaṅs*),” 87. Twenty-six manuscripts of this text are found in FEMC catalogs, with dozens more cited in unpublished catalogs.

<sup>129</sup> IMA 12, l. 16; IMA 39, 67; de Bernon, “La littérature des «avantages» (*ānisaṅs*),” 92. Manuscripts in published FEMC catalogs include: 020-A.02.08.02.III.6; 026\*-PP.03.03.03.III.6; 108-A.04.03.02.III.6; 072-A.04.07.01.III.6; 003-A.07.01.03.III.6; d.147.III.6; d.580.III.6; d.757.III.6; d.758.III.6; b.354.III.6; and d.144.III.6.

*Paramatthamaṅgala*,<sup>130</sup> its content is also almost identical to the oldest surviving physical Pali-Lanna manuscript on this theme, dating to 1666, thirty-eight years after the first epigraphical citation of a Pali-Khmer version in IMA 12.<sup>131</sup> The fifth *ānisaṅs* discourse cited, *Ānisaṅs brah̄ dhamm gorab*, extols the merits of those who listen attentively to Buddhist sermons.<sup>132</sup>

Another four titles cited in the inscriptions are best described as narrative sermons. Unlike the five *ānisaṅs* compositions, which are all just one fascicle in length, these four narrative sermons tend to be longer, up to sixteen fascicles each. As cited above, a few of the inscriptions indicate that one, two, or three fascicles (modern Khmer *kand*, here acting as a synonym for *khsae*) of a given text were recited. In each case it appears that these numbers do not indicate the full length of the texts in question, but rather how many fascicles were selected to recite on the particular occasion commemorated by the inscription. The most frequently cited narrative sermon is the *Mahā vessantar jātak*, a Pali-Khmer version of the Pali *Vessantara-jātaka*, which appears in four inscriptions.<sup>133</sup> Just as in Laos and Thailand, this narrative is usually referred to in Khmer inscriptions as simply the “Great Life” (*mahājāti*). Manuscript versions in Cambodian collections range in length between twelve and sixteen fascicles; copies of this text are exceptionally abundant throughout the country.<sup>134</sup>

Another common narrative sermon, mentioned in IMA 34 and 37, is the *Das jātak*, likely an abbreviated Pali-Khmer version of the last ten *jātakas* from the *Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā*. Manuscripts that survive today sometimes consist of ten fascicles, one for each *jātaka* narrative.<sup>135</sup> It is also possible that the *Das jātak* cited in the inscriptions sometimes refers to a longer, non-abbreviated version of each of the ten tales; such manuscripts are particularly numerous in colonial-era collections.

Lines 59–60 of IMA 37 mention a text called *mbalaij*<sup>o</sup>. This is an old spelling for *Mahālāy* or *Māleyyadevatther*, an abbreviated, one-fascicle Pali-Khmer version of the Pali *Māleyyadevattheravatthu*.<sup>136</sup> This narrative assumes a prominent place in Lanna, Lao, and Siamese Buddhist traditions, but is little known in contemporary Cambodia.<sup>137</sup> Its inclusion in IMA 37 from 1700 confirms the long-

<sup>130</sup> Cicuzza, “The Benefits of Ordination.”

<sup>131</sup> PNTMP 030306004\_05 (<http://lannamanuscripts.net/en/manuscripts/4990>).

<sup>132</sup> IMA 37, l. 59; de Bernon, “La littérature des «avantages» (*ānisaṅs*),” 94. A Pali version, *Dhammasavanānisaṃsakathā*, circulates in Siamese manuscript collections (Skilling and Santi, *Pāli Literature Transmitted in Central Siam*, 92, §2.92). Lanna versions are extant as well (Skilling and Santi, *Pāli and Vernacular Literature Transmitted in Central and Northern Siam*, 325, §18.24).

<sup>133</sup> IMA 4 (face A, l. 13), IMA 12 (l. 15), IMA 37 (l. 69), and IMA 39 (l. 64).

<sup>134</sup> One hundred and forty-one manuscripts of this text appear in the FEMC’s published catalogs, with at least a hundred more in unpublished material.

<sup>135</sup> Manuscripts of this abbreviated collection in the FEMC’s published catalogs include: 035-A.03.08.02.III.5; 012-A.04.07.01.III.5; 013-A.04.17.02.III.5; 011-A.10.10.01.III.5; and d.573.III.5.

<sup>136</sup> For the Pali version, see Collins and Denis, “Brah̄ Māleyyadevattheravatthu”; and Collins, “The Story of the Elder Māleyyadeva.” On Pali-Lanna, Pali-Siamese, and Siamese versions of the text, see Brereton, *Thai Tellings of Phra Malai*.

<sup>137</sup> Pali-Khmer manuscripts of this text do not appear in published FEMC materials. In their unpublished catalogs, the following manuscripts of *Māleyyadevatther* are known: 0117-B.01.06.01.III.1; 136-PP.03.03.03.III.5; 044-B.01.03.01.III.5; 057-B.06.01.04.III.1; and 058-B.06.01.04.III.1. It is cited, along with the *Anisaṅs brah̄ dhamm gorab*, the *Brah̄ mātuṅṅ*, the *Mābosath jātak*, the *Mahā vessantar jātak*, and the *Paṭham sambodhi*, as a sermon to recite for buddha image consecration rites in some leporello manuscripts (Lī Suvīr, *Bidhi dbr̄vō pūny buddhabhisek*, 39).

standing presence of this text in Khmer traditions as well.

The fourth narrative sermon in the inscriptions is likely the text known today as *Paṭham trās'*. The evidence for this text appears on lines 11–12 of IMA 34: *sān is sutrā dasajātr brah abbhīdhamm prathamam brah dhammacakkeḥ phoṇ*<sup>138</sup> (“sponsored [the copying of manuscripts of] *Das jātak*, *Abhidhamm* [7 *gambū*], *Paṭham* [*trās'*], and *Dhammacakka*[*ppavattana sūtr'*]). The term *prathamam* has posed interpretative problems for other scholars. Saveros Pou reads it as a modifier to *brah abbhīdhamm* (“du suprême Abhidhamma”), whereas Urasri Varasarin and Vong Sotheara append it to the beginning of *brah dhammacakkeḥ*, without hazarding a translation into modern Thai or Khmer.<sup>139</sup> In my view, *prathamam* is not a modifier but the abbreviated name of a common manuscript text. Compositions beginning with *prathamam* or *paṭham* that appear frequently in the manuscript corpus include *Paṭham trās'*, *Paṭham sambodhi*, *Paṭham viñ sūn*, and *Paṭham jībān*.<sup>140</sup> The latter two are challenging, esoteric texts on cosmogony and meditation, not intended for use as public sermons. The thirty- or thirty-one-fascicle *Paṭham sambodhi* is widespread in Cambodia and would be a likely candidate, but this particular version was not translated from Siamese into Khmer until the nineteenth century.<sup>141</sup> This leaves the four- to seven-fascicle *Paṭham trās'*, a pre-nineteenth century translation of an older recension of the Pali *Paṭhamasambodhi* narrative.<sup>142</sup> This text is widely distributed across Cambodia<sup>143</sup> and is a frequent subject for sermons in consecration rituals.<sup>144</sup>

In addition to these four narrative sermons, the inscriptions also provide evidence for four additional sermons that bridge the realms of narrative and doctrine. One such text is a bitextual version of the Buddha's first discourse. The same passage from IMA 34 cited above in connection with the *Paṭham trās'* also provides evidence for a sermon version of the *Dhammacakka*[*ppavattana sūtr*] (*brah dhammacakkeḥ*). This is likely not a reference to the short Pali text found in the canon—the same text used as a protective *paritta* chant—but rather to a four-fascicle Pali-Khmer homiletic composition that appears in manuscript collections throughout Cambodia.<sup>145</sup>

Another hybrid doctrinal and narrative text cited in Middle-period inscriptions is *Mātugum*

<sup>138</sup> Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 100; Uraisi, *Cārīk nagar vāt samāy blān brah nagar*, 106.

<sup>139</sup> Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 34 et 38,” 286; Uraisi, *Cārīk nagar vāt samāy blān brah nagar*, 167; and Vong, *Silācārīk nai prades kambujā samāy kantāl*, 190.

<sup>140</sup> Some manuscripts of the *Saṅgāyanā grē 3* and the *Saṅgāyanā grē 5*—scripts for sermons to be preached by multiple monks in question-and-answer format—bear the titles *Paṭham saṅgāyanā grē 3* and *Paṭham saṅgāyanā grē 5*. It is possible that the *prathamam* in IMA 34 refers to one of these manuscripts instead. I think this is less likely, since, as discussed below, the sermon text of the *Saṅgāyanā grē 3* is referred to by quite a different phrase in IMA 37.

<sup>141</sup> Santi, “Court Buddhism in Thai-Khmer Relations,” 420.

<sup>142</sup> The older Pali rescension is reflected in Cœdès and Filliozat, *The Paṭhamasambodhi*.

<sup>143</sup> Thirty-two manuscripts of this Pali-Khmer sermon appear in published FEMC materials, with at least as many more known in unpublished catalogs.

<sup>144</sup> Giteau, *Le bornage rituel*, 40; Kun, “Les rituels accompagnant les prédications,” 100; and Santi, “Court Buddhism in Thai-Khmer Relations,” 420.

<sup>145</sup> Manuscripts in published FEMC catalogs include: 005-A.05.13.02.III.2; 001-A.10.08.01.III.2; b.235.III.2; e.4.III.2; b.176.III.2; b.177.III.2; c.2.III.2; d.448.III.2; 040.III.2; and 010.III.2.

or *Mātaguṇ sūtr*.<sup>146</sup> Despite the title, this one-fascicle text is not a discourse from the Pali canon at all, but a popular Pali-Khmer bitextual retelling of how the Buddha journeyed to the heavenly realm of Tavatimsa to preach the Abhidhamma in order to repay his debt (*guṇ*) to his mother.<sup>147</sup> The basic outline of this story is provided in the *Atthasālinī*, a Pali commentary attributed to Buddhaghosa on the first book of the Abhidhamma, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*.<sup>148</sup>

The opening verses of the *Atthasālinī* are also used as the frame narrative for the most popular and important Pali-Khmer bitext on the Abhidhamma in Cambodia, the *Abbidhamm 7 gambīr*. Found in hundreds of copies across the country, this seven-fascicle composition presents some of the core themes of the Abhidhamma, along with other narratives and themes, in a homiletic format. Similar manuscripts are found throughout Lanna, Lao, and Siamese contexts.<sup>149</sup> Five inscriptions between 1550 and 1750 mention a sermon text by a name variously written as *brah abbidhamm* (IMA 4), *brah amvidhamm* (IMA 12), *brah abbidham* (K. 264), *brah abbidhamm* (IMA 34), or *brah abbidhamm* (IMA 37). In all likelihood, these inscriptions are all referring to the same bitext, namely the *Abbidhamm 7 gambīr*.<sup>150</sup>

The fourth doctrinal/narrative sermon mentioned in the inscriptions is a text known today as *Saṅgāyanā grē 3* (“Three-chair [sermon on the first] recitation-council”). The term *saṅgāyanā* appears in multiple passages in the inscriptions, including IMA 34 (l. 7–9; 14). However, the only unambiguous reference to the *Saṅgāyanā grē 3* appears on lines 50–51 of IMA 37: *saṅghaiyyanā pucchāvisuccanā brah abbidhamm brah sūt brah vinaiy<sup>o</sup>* (“recitation-council [with] questions and answers on the Abhidhamma[-piṭaka], the Sutta[-piṭaka], and the Vinaya[-piṭaka]”).<sup>151</sup> This is an apt description for the *Saṅgāyanā grē 3*, a four- to six-fascicle sermon script in which three monks, each sitting on a different chair, take on the roles of Kassapa, Upāli, and Ānanda at the first recitation-council after the Buddha’s passing into *parinibbāna*, with Kassapa asking Upāli about the Vinaya and Ānanda about the Sutta and the Abhidhamma.<sup>152</sup>

The final text mentioned in Middle-period inscriptions has so far escaped the attention of epigraphers. The passage in which it appears, on line 61 of IMA 37, is straightforward enough: *nimantr anak sammner sūtr dhaṛmmatīyok aṅg 2 pragen pād 1<sup>53</sup>* (“invited two novice monks to chant the *dhaṛmmatīyok*, [offering] one *pād* of silver to each”). However, the unusual term *dhaṛmmatīyok*

<sup>146</sup> K. 264, l. 11: *mātaguṇ*; IMA 37, l. 59: *brah mātaguṇ*.

<sup>147</sup> Thirty-two such manuscripts are cited in published FEMC materials; dozens more appear in their unpublished catalogs.

<sup>148</sup> Müller, *The Atthasālinī*, 1; 11.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, PLMP 01012903006\_00 (<https://www.laomanuscripts.net/en/texts/12556>).

<sup>150</sup> The relative dating of the *Abbidhamm 7 gambīr* and other bitextual Abhidhamma sermons in Cambodian manuscript collections has not yet been established. It is possible that the inscriptions are referring to another Abhidhamma sermon, such as *Abbidhamm traitrīns*. The overwhelming presence of *Abbidhamm 7 gambīr* in Khmer monastic libraries suggests otherwise, however.

<sup>151</sup> Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 79; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 114.

<sup>152</sup> Kun, “Les rituels accompagnant les prédications,” 101–102.

<sup>153</sup> Ang, *Inscriptions of Angkor Wat*, 79; cf. Uraisi, *Cārik nagar vāt samāy hlān brah nagar*, 114.

has been misread by Mahā Bidūr Krassem, Saveros Pou, and Uraisi Varasarin as *dhārm̄m gī yoke*.<sup>154</sup> Neither these three scholars nor David Chandler attempt a translation.<sup>155</sup> Pou correctly notes that the phrase *dhārm̄m gī yoke* must function as the subject of the verb *sūtr*, “to chant.”<sup>156</sup> In my reading of the inscription, the *akṣara* others read as *ga* is in fact *ta*. This produces the term *dhārm̄matīyoke*, which I understand as *dhārm̄ma[pa]tīyoke* or *dhammaṭṭīyog*. This is the formal name, cited in the final stanza of the text itself, of two verse chants still recited in Cambodia today for buddha image consecration rites.<sup>157</sup> The most popular of these is generally known as *Dhārm̄m yog* (often spelled *dhārm̄m y’oke*), and consists of seventy-one stanzas in the Khmer *banṇol* meter.<sup>158</sup> A late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century leporello includes an authorial colophon to this Khmer poem, noting that it was translated from Siamese by a monk with the rank of Braḥ Dhammalikhit in 1869.<sup>159</sup> The original they worked from still circulates in Cambodia, typically under the common name *Dhārm̄m yog siēm*. Like its Khmer translation, the Siamese text is a poem in seventy-one stanzas.<sup>160</sup> Since the text IMA 39 was carved in 1747, some 122 years before a Khmer translation was available, the reference to *dhārm̄ma[pa]tīyoke* in the inscription must refer to the original Siamese poem. Ritual instructions found in some leporello manuscripts indicate that the *Dhārm̄m yog* text, whether in Khmer or Siamese, should be intoned by two young boys with beautiful voices.<sup>161</sup> The textual identity of the term *dhārm̄ma[pa]tīyoke* is further confirmed by its context in IMA 37, which records that two novice monks (*anak sammner sūtr dhārm̄matīyoke aṅg 2*) were invited to recite it.

Though the references to each text are often sparse, the epigraphical record of the mid-sixteenth through mid-eighteenth centuries furnishes the titles of eighteen Buddhist texts that remain current in Cambodian manuscript collections and in the ritual practice of traditionalist monasteries. These texts include four liturgical chants in Pali and one in Siamese, as well as thirteen different Pali-Khmer sermons, among them five *ānisaṅs* titles, four narrative sermons, and four that combine narrative and doctrinal elements. The wide proliferation of these texts in colonial-era manuscript collections suggests that their popularity continued throughout the Middle period, fading only with the dominance of printed books and new homiletic styles in the mid-twentieth century.

<sup>154</sup> Mahā Bidūr Krassem, *Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor*, 116; Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 35, 36, 37 et 39,” 321; Uraisi, *Cārik nāgar vāt samāy hlān braḥ nāgar*, 114.

<sup>155</sup> Chandler, “An Eighteenth Century Inscription from Angkor Wat,” 24.

<sup>156</sup> Pou, “Inscriptions modernes d’Angkor 35, 36, 37 et 39,” 321.

<sup>157</sup> For an audio recording, see Walker, “Stirring and Stilling.”

<sup>158</sup> Giteau, *Le bornage rituel*, 73–79; Bizot, “La consécration des statues,” 111–114; Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 1349–1358.

<sup>159</sup> Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 417–420.

<sup>160</sup> Walker, “Unfolding Buddhism,” 1063–1080.

<sup>161</sup> Lī Suvīr, *Bidhi dbvō pūny buddhābhisek*, 50–51.

## CONCLUSION

Inscriptions carved on the walls of Angkor Wat and other locations in Cambodia between 1550 and 1750 were not made for the purpose of recording Buddhist textual history. Each of these stone records is at once a legal document that signals the benefaction of property and a testament to the faith and religious aspirations of the donors who commissioned them. These inscriptions nevertheless reveal much about Buddhist ritual life in Middle Cambodia, particularly the sacred texts that supported, inspired, and accompanied religious ceremonies.

Most of the texts mentioned are transmitted as Pali-Khmer bitexts, and the witness of IMA 32 from 1688 confirms that the distinctive style of Indic-vernacular bitexts was already well established among Cambodian writers of this period. This information corroborates the hypothesis that the thirteen sermon texts mentioned were almost certainly written in this style, the same style in which they were recopied onto palm-leaf manuscripts that survive from the colonial era. While direct quotations from only three texts can be positively identified in the epigraphical record, these nevertheless provide a welcome glimpse into the intertextual landscape of Middle Cambodia. Buddhist authors freely incorporated material from the Khmer and Pali chants that circulated during this era, including the vernacular poem *Lpök padum* and pericopes drawn from canonical and commentarial Pali literature.

The most telling records are those that mention the titles of specific texts that were either donated, chanted, or read aloud as sermons. The contextual information provided in the inscriptions is just detailed enough to allow for a reasonably secure identification of all eighteen titles with texts found in palm-leaf and leporello manuscripts today. Since authorial colophons are hard to come by for most Buddhist genres in Cambodia, the epigraphical evidence for these texts provides an extremely helpful tool for establishing a timeline of how Buddhist literature developed in the country. Many of the texts cited in the inscriptions also have parallels in Lanna, Lao, and Siamese manuscript traditions, making cross-linguistic comparison possible and furnishing the essential basis for writing a regional history of Buddhist texts in mainland Southeast Asia.

Much work remains to be done before such a history can be written. Paratextual clues in the manuscripts themselves—colophons, annotations, ritual instructions, and the like—shed light on how Buddhist texts were actually used. Tracking down these paratexts, particularly when some texts are found in hundreds of separate copies, is a huge task. More challenging still is the work of detecting semantic, syntactic, and orthographic patterns to discern the relative dating of texts in the corpus. The precisely dated epigraphical record provides a secure point of departure, but manuscript texts—almost all of which have passed through many generations of copying—are full of uncertainties.

Given these difficulties, is a robust timeline even possible? Can we imagine an in-depth chronology for Cambodian and other mainland Southeast Asian Buddhist literature between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries? The epigraphical evidence considered in this article is only a start. The inscriptions force us to break down the atemporality of Buddhist discourse and

sharpen our analytical tools against the hard edges of historical events. Only with great care can our implements tease out the Middle-period temporal layers hidden in colonial-era manuscripts. Moreover, as Grégory Mikaelian reminds us, the written literature of Middle Cambodia, in prose and in verse, cannot be properly understood apart from its oral dimension, including the melodic forms of recitation practiced by preachers and scribes alike.<sup>162</sup> The manuscripts themselves—products of a vocally infused tradition of copying—provide traces, both textual and paratextual, of their performance. Though more distant in time, the Middle-period inscriptions are equally alive with this inherited orality, and we would be remiss to neglect the sonic and ritual contexts that brought chisel to stone.

As Cambodia's diverse manuscript archives gradually become more accessible to local and international scholars through cataloging, preservation, and digitization initiatives, more researchers will hopefully be drawn to the literary heritage of Middle Cambodia. Khmer authors between the mid-sixteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries wrote with stylistic prowess, a flair for multilingual prose, an appreciation for Buddhist scholastic norms, and a regional awareness that connected them to the rest of mainland Southeast Asia. Their voices, whether carved on rock pillars or fragile leaves, are worth straining to hear.

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<sup>162</sup> Mikaelian, "Des sources lacunaires," 290.

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