

# Comparison of the Khom Script Manuscripts of the *Majjhimanikāya* Found in Thailand and Cambodia

Suchada SRISETTHAWORAKUL

## 1. Background and Previous Research

According to the study of history of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, specifically in Siamese kingdom and later Khmer kingdom in the previous research “A Problem on the Origin of the Pāli Canon of Khom Script Manuscripts Found in Thailand and Cambodia”,<sup>1)</sup> the evidence of transmission of Theravada Buddhism and manuscripts of the Pāli Canon in Khmer Kingdom is scarce and what evidence there is indirect. On the other hand, Siamese and related chronicles show a lot of concrete evidences of the transmission of Theravada Buddhism and manuscripts of the Pāli Canon in the area of the Siamese kingdom. Moreover, most Khom script manuscripts have no colophon which creates difficulty in knowing about their origin and age with any certainty. The data, that appears in the chronicles or historical documents, seems to support the theory that the Khom script manuscripts of the Pāli canon in Cambodia are influenced by those from Thailand. However, the evidence is insufficient to determine the origin in both countries. Therefore, to clarify this issue, a preliminary comparative study of selected texts of the Pāli canon in Khom script manuscripts is necessary. In this paper, a portion of the *Mūlapaṇṇāsa* of the *Majjhimanikāya* will be used for a comparative study of the Khom script manuscripts found in both countries.

## 2. Overview of Selected Khom Script Manuscripts

### 2.1. Selected Khom script manuscripts of the Pāli canon from Thailand (K01–K05)

Five sets of Khom script manuscript of the Pāli Canon from Thailand are selected as research materials. The first manuscript (K01) is found at Wat Phrananchoeng, Ayutthaya. It was created in 1779 CE or Thonburi Period (King Taksin). The second manuscript (K02) is from

National Library, Bangkok, the year of creation is unknown. The next one (K03) is found at Wat Phra Chetupon (Wat Pho), Bangkok. Its edition is Thep Chum Num, the special edition of King Rama III, therefore, its creation time can be dated around 1824–1854. The last two manuscripts (K04 and K05) are from National Library, Bangkok and were created during the Rattanakosin Period (King Rama III). The detail of each manuscript shows as follow.

## 2.2. Selected Khom script manuscripts of the Pāli canon from Cambodia (K95)

In 2015, the DTP digitized Khom script manuscript of the Pāli Canon from Vat Saravan Techo, Phnom Penh, Cambodia (K95). The period of creating this manuscript is unknown and only one phuk, the phuk number 6, had been found. Its content is Sīhanādavagga of the Mūlapaṇṇāsa in the *Majjhimanikāya*, beginning from the end of the Mahāsīhanādasutta to the end of the Anumānasutta. The first page of the manuscript shows the text title and the table of contents. The table of contents shows the sutta titles along with alphabetical page numbers, but they are written in Thai language with Khom script.

## 3. Comparison of Selected Khom Script Manuscripts

When comparing the above Khom script manuscripts, it is useful to include palm-leaf manuscripts from other traditions as well in order to gain a larger view of the manuscript transmission in the Theravada tradition. The process of comparison starts by transliterating the content of each selected manuscript from local scripts such as Khom, Tham, Mon, Burmese, and Sinhalese into the roman script. The transcriptions have been used for

Manuscript Code	Inscribed year (CE)	Age (years)	Reign	Location
K01: TH_08_01_004_00_01	1779	239	King Taksin (Thonburi Period)	Wat Phrananchoeng, Ayutthaya, Thailand
K02: TH_05_01_036_00_01	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	National Library, Bangkok, Thailand
K03: TH_04_01_999_00_01	1824-1854	164-194	Unknown Thep Chum Num Ed. (King Rama III)	Wat Phra Chetupon (Wat Pho), Bangkok, Thailand
K04: TH_05_01_035_00_01	1841	177	King Rama III (Rattanakosin Period)	National Library, Bangkok, Thailand
K05: TH_05_01_034_00_01	1848	170	King Rama III (Rattanakosin Period)	National Library, Bangkok, Thailand

Figure 1 A detail of five sets of selected Khom script manuscripts of the Pāli Canon from Thailand

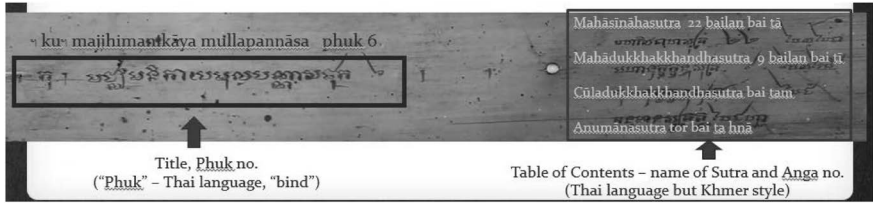


Figure 2 The first page of selected Khom script manuscript of the Pāli Canon from Cambodia

### Comparison of Selected Khom Script Manuscripts

		Synoptic table of the content			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Burmese printed edition (Chattā saṅgāyana Tipitaka)</li> </ul>	HM01	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	B01	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	B02	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	B03	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	B04	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	B05	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	Be	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	C01	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	C02	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	C03	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	C04	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	C05	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	Ce	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	Fe	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	K01	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transliteration from "Local script" to "Roman script"</li> </ul>	K02	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	K03	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	K04	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	K05	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	K95	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do Comparison</li> </ul>	M01	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	Se	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā
	T01	apariyādināyevassa	sāriputta	tathāgata	dharmadesanā

Figure 3 Sample of the synoptic table

creating a synoptic table with reference to the Burmese printed edition (Chattā saṅgāyana edition) as the preliminary text. Then, the content of all selected Khom script manuscripts and those from other traditions has been compared in the synoptic table word by word.

Based on the palm-leaf Manuscript found in Cambodia, the area of comparison will be focused on the Sihanādavagga of the Mūlapaṇṇāsa in the *Majjhimanikāya* texts beginning from the end of the Mahāsihanādasutta to the end of the Anumānasutta. Its length is around 50 pages of palm-leaf manuscript or 4,670 words. As well as this, manuscripts from other tradition have been used. One set of Tham script and one set of Mon script manuscript from Thailand, five sets of Burmese script manuscripts from Myanmar and five sets of Sinhalese script manuscripts from Sri Lanka.

#### 4. Comparison Result of Selected Khom Script Manuscripts

Even though the overview content of each manuscript is almost the same, many significant omissions and differences are found. For instance, at the end of the

K01	^	^	^	^	^	^	^	^	^
K02	^	^	^	^	^	^	^	^	^
K03	mameve	taṃ	sammā	vadamāno	vadeyya	asammohadhammo	satto	loke	upapanno
K04	mameve	taṃ	sammā	vadamāno	vadeyya	asammohadhammo	satto	loke	upapanno
K05	mameve	taṃ	sammā	vadamāno	vadeyya	asammohadhammo	satto	loke	upapanno
K95	^	^	^	^	^	^	^	^	^

Figure 4 Samples of omission pattern

K01	sukkhassa	ca	pahānāya	dukkhassa	ca	pahānā	K01	me	puggalo	^	appiyo	amanāpo
K02	sukkhassa	pa	pahānā	dukkhassa	ca	pahānā	K02	me	puggalo	^	appiyo	amanāpo
K03	dukkhassa	ca	pahānā	sukkhassa	ca	pahānā	K03	^	puggalo	me	appiyo	amanāpo
K04	dukkhassa	ca	pahānā	sukkhassa	ca	pahānā	K04	me	puggalo	me	appiyo	amanāpo
K05	dukkhassa	ca	pahānā	sukkhassa	ca	pahānā	K05	^	puggalo	me	appiyo	amanāpo
K95	sukkhassa	^	pahānā	dukkhassa	ca	pahānā	K95	me	puggalo	^	appiyo	amanāpo

Figure 5 Samples of word transpositions

K01	ayaṃ	^	puggalo	appiyo	amanāpo	ahaṃceva	kho	panayaṃ
K02	ayaṃ	^	puggalo	appiyo	amapo	ahaṃceva	kho	panaayaṃ
K03	ayaṃ	me	puggalo	appiyo	amanāpo	ahañceva	kho	panassayaṃ
K04	ayaṃ	me	puggalo	appiyo	amanāpo	ahañceva	kho	panassayaṃ
K05	ayaṃ	me	puggalo	appiyo	amanāpo	ahañceva	kho	panassayaṃ
K95	ayaṃ	^	puggalo	appiyo	amanāpo	ahaṃceva	kho	panaayaṃ

Figure 6 Samples of word differences

Mahāsīhanādasutta, several words in K01, K02 and K95 are omitted while all of them are available in K03, K04 and K05. Moreover, these kinds of omission pattern appear in other several places, in total more than 50 words.

And, in several cases, we found word transpositions and obvious differences between the group of K01, K02, K95 and the group of K03, K04, K05, in total more than 60 cases.

Based on the comparison result, these selected Khom Script Manuscripts can be divided into two groups: group A (K01, K02, K95) and group B (K03, K04, K05).

#### 4.1. Group A (Thonburi Lineage)

K01 is the manuscript of the Thonburi period (1779 CE) that is the oldest one among these selected Khom script manuscripts. K02 and K95 (manuscript from Cambodia) are very similar to each other but their ages are unknown. However, their content is almost entirely consistent with K01. Therefore, it seems that K01, K02 and K95 come from the same or very close lineage. It could be called Thonburi lineage. As well as this, it seems that some parts

K01		puggalo	panayam	pāpiccho	uppādetabbam	yo	kho	panayam
K02	^	puggalo	panaayam	pāpiccho	uppādetabbam	yo	kho	panayam
K03	me	puggalo	panassam	pāpiccho	uppādetabbam	yo	kho	panassam
K04	me	puggalo	panassam	pāpiccho	uppādetabbam	yo	kho	panassam
K05	me	puggalo	panassam	pāpiccho	uppādetabbam	yo	kho	panassam
K95	^	puggalo	panaayam	pāpiccho	uppādetabbam	yo	kho	panayam


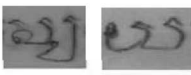
Tham/Burmese script	→	Khom script
		
“ssa” and “ya”		“ssa” and “ya”

Figure 7 The confusion between “ssa” and “ya” in many places in K01, K02, and K95

of K01, K02, K95 agree with Burmese script manuscripts rather than Sinhalese script manuscripts. Additionally, many examples of transliteration confusion across traditions can be found, from “Tham/Burmese script” to “Khom script”. For example, “ssa” and “ya” are in the set of similar letters in Tham/Burmese script not in Khom script, and the confusion between “ssa” and “ya” has been found in many places in K01, K02, and K95.

#### 4.2. Group B (Rattanakosin (Rama III) Lineage)

K03, K04, K05 are the manuscripts of the Rattanakosin period in the reign of King Rama III (1824–1854 CE). Therefore, it could be called Rattanakosin (Rama III) lineage. Besides, it seems that some parts of K03, K04, K05 agree with Sinhalese script manuscripts rather than Burmese script manuscripts. Moreover, it feels that some parts of K03, K04, K05 agree with Thai printed edition, Syāraṭṭha edition (Se), rather than the group of the Thonburi Period (K01, K02, K95).

#### 4.3. Information of Pāli canon in Thonburi period

Information about the Pāli Canon in Thailand and in Cambodia during the Thonburi period (1768–1782 CE) appears in historical documents. In the chapter “Legend of the Royal Pāli Canon” in *The Legend of Library, Montein Dhamma library, Vajirañña library, Buddhasaṅgha Library and the National Library* states as follows:

In the last large war in Ayutthaya, the Burmese army did not attack Nakhon Si Thammaraja, therefore, a huge amount of Pāli Canon is surviving there. In the year 2312 BE (1769 CE), king Taksin with his army attacked Nakhon Si Thammaraja and borrowed the Pāli Canon from there back to Thonburi. He also asked senior monks to go to Cambodia and many cities to seek some

texts of the Pāli Canon that cannot be found in Thonburi.<sup>2)</sup>

This information shows that there existed Khom script manuscripts in Cambodia at least since Thonburi period.

## 5. Conclusion

The comparison result demonstrates that the examined section of the Pāli Canon in Khom script manuscripts in Cambodia and Thailand come from the same lineage. Moreover, the Pāli Canon of Khom script manuscripts have been available in Cambodia at least since Thonburi period. It is also possible to state that Pāli Canon of Khom script manuscripts have been available in Cambodia since Ayutthaya period. Therefore, at that time, king Taksin would have known of the Pāli Canon in Cambodia. However, it is also worth noting that during the Ayutthaya period, some parts of recent Cambodia were still vassal states of Ayutthaya.

With regard to the question of whether Khom script manuscripts from Thailand and Cambodia belong to the same lineage and whether they have any significant differences, it seems that the differences are minimal and they both influenced each other.

As to the basic question of whether the Dhammachai Tipitaka Project needs make use of Khom script manuscripts from both countries for creating a database of palm-leaf manuscripts to produce a critical edition of the Pāli canon, based on the information studied, it is sufficient to focus exclusively on the Khom script manuscripts from Thailand.

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## Notes

1) See Srisetthaworakul (2018, 64–70).

2) Translated Srisetthaworakul from HRH Prince Damrong (1916, 4).

## Bibliography

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**Key words** Majjhimanikāya, Khom script, Palm leaf manuscript, Pāli canon, Siam, Khmer, Thailand, Cambodia, Comparison, Lineage

(DCI-Dhammachai Tipitaka Project Thailand & PhD)