Inscription of Wat Phra Ngam (K. ???)

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Summary

This inscription in 6 Sanskrit verses in elaborate metres begins (stanza 1) with praise of a deity, perhaps Brahmā, then (stanza 2) praises of a king, whose name is lost to damage, then (stanza 3) further praise of the king in which he is likened to an avatāra of Viṣṇu, then (stanza 4) what may be still further praise of the king likening him to Hanumān (?), then (stanza 5) praise of a city whose name is not Sanskritic. That city may be either compared with Hastināpurī and Dvāravatī, or it stands at the head of a list in which Hastināpurī and Dvāravatī are also included. The final stanza (6) enumerates the gifts of gold, cattle, lands and slaves that the king gave to Paśupati (presumably there was a śiva-liṅga at this place).

Palaeographic description

The lettering is similar to that of seventh-century Khmer epigraphs, but with unusually elongated descending and ascending strokes, volutes and flourishes. The ā-mātra, for instance, is sometimes short and business-like, but sometimes is allowed to descend well below the body of the character to which it is attached and to loop underneath it.

This recalls C8th records, such as K. 1254. But the archaic shape of most instances of the retroflex ṇ instead recalls fifth-century records such as K. 875. Arguably another archaism is the dropped miniaturised final m, apparently with a virāma beneath it, in the last line. Such miniaturised letters are found in old records from various parts of the Indian world (for instance in Licchavi inscriptions), but we know of none from Khmer records. A discussion of their use elsewhere in Southeast Asia, however, may be found in Griffiths *et al.* 2017, pp. 84–88.

Edition

1. Mālinī

〈1〉 jayati kamalayoneḥ śubhraraśmipratānaṁ
pragalitatanudīptyā krāntadiṅmaṇḍalo yaḥ
dharaṇidharanitambe sammate 'smi[n] (ma) [◡] rCe
[◡◡◡◡◡–––◡––◡–×]

2. Śārdūlavikrīḍita

〈2〉 saṁgrāmeṣu mukhendunā svadaśanajyotsnām ṛtasyandinā
(se)nodyogaviśāradaḥ priyaraṇo dātā nayajñaś śuci(ḥ)
śrīmadvaṁśadhurandharaḥ p ṛthuyaśā [––◡––◡×]
[–––◡◡–◡–◡◡◡–/––◡–](rmur) n(ṛ)pa[ḥ]

3. Upendravajrā

〈3〉 Adhyeṣitāvataraṇas tridaśaiḥ p ṛthivyāṁ
(sat)kāra(ni)grahak ṛte sadasajjanānā[m]
* (nn)Vya (U)ddharat(i) kārttayug(ī)[na] [–×]
[×–◡–◡◡◡–◡◡–◡–×]

4. Śārdūlavikrīḍita

〈4〉 tenātyadbhutapauruṣeṇa hi mayā tīrtvā pratijñārṇṇavaṁ
bhuktvā sadvijayā(bh)idhānam am ṛtaṁ (p)ī(tvā pra) [––◡×]
k ṛtvādarśag ṛheṣv iva pravitatāṁ l [––◡––◡×]
[–––◡◡–◡–◡◡◡–/––◡––◡–]

5. Śārdūlavikrīḍita

〈5〉 śrīyānaṁ dimiriṅgam apratipuraṁ sā hastinākhyā purī _
sā ca dvāravatī vibhūtimahatī khyātā yathā vaiṣṇavī _

Etac [c]āpi [ᴗ] [.](au) [ᴗ–][.]ṣa(ṇa) [ᴗ–––ᴗ––ᴗ–]
[.]r[.] [.]v[.] [.]y[.] [(g)da/ṭṭa]rasadma [.] ṝ [ᴗ–––][.](ka) nāmnā mayā

6. Śārdūlavikrīḍita

〈6〉 kośārtthaṁ (su)vibhūṣaṇaṁ paśupates triṁśacchataṁ kāñcanaṁ _
kṣetras(y)āpi śatatrayaṁ (ma)[h]i[ṣ]i(ka)[ṁ] (sa)ṁkhy(ā)ta[m] (ekaṁ) śat(aM) _
dhenūnāñ ca catuśśataṁ ṣaḍadhikadvyarddhaṁ śataṁ c[e]ṭakā
Ity etat para(me)śvarasya (likhitaṁ) dā(naṁ) śilāpa(ṭ)ṭak(e)

Translation

1.

Victorious is (*jayati*)the expanse of bright rays (*śubhraraśmīpratānam* of lotus-navelled [Brahmā], him by whom the [whole] circle of the directions has been bestridden (*krāntadiṁmaṇḍalaḥ*) by the radiance streaming from his body (*pragalitatanudīptyā*) onto this (*asmin*) revered (*sammate*) mountain ridge (*dharaṇidharanitambe*)...

2.

Who was skilled in inspiring his army (*senodyogaviśāradaḥ*) in battles (*saṁgrāmeṣu*) by means of the moon of his face (*mukhendunā*), dripping with the nectar that was the moonlight of his teeth (*svadaśanajyotsnām ṛtasyandinā*), fond of battles (*priyaraṇaḥ*) generous (*dātā*), politically astute (*nayajñaḥ*), pure (*śuciḥ*), who bore the yoke of his glorious dynasty (*śrīmadvaṁśadhurandharaḥ*), of broad fame (*p ṛthuyaśāḥ*)...

3.

... whose descent upon the earth was desired by the gods (*tridaśaiḥ*) for the sake of honouring good people and punishing bad ones...

4.

Being one of astonishing heroism, I here (*tena...mayā*) have indeed (*hi*) crossed the ocean of my promises, have enjoyed the ambrosia that is called true victory, have drunk...

5.

Śrīyānaṁdimiriṅgamapratipura (?)... and this city called Hastināpura, and this Dvāravatī, great with prosperity, of Viṣṇu, and also this (*etac cāpi*) ...

6.

For the treasury, beautiful ornaments for Paśupati [equivalent in weight to] three hundred [coins] of gold; three hundred [units] of land; a herd of female buffalos numbering one hundred; and four hundred cows; two hundred and fifty-six slaves — these are the gifts to the Supreme Lord recorded in writing on [this] slab of stone.

Commentary

2.

The last syllables of the line are visible on the photograph sent by John Guy, but not on the photos published in the Silpakorn journal.

3.

Presumably this stanza presents the king as an incarnation (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu, yearned for by the gods.

4.

Perhaps the king is comparing himself here to Hanumān?

5.

It is not at all clear how to divide up the first twelve syllables of this stanza. Could it be a single toponym: Śrīyānaṁdimiriṅgamapratipuraṁ? Or is *apratipuram* intended to mean "without a [comparable] counterpart city", in which case Śrīyānaṁdimiriṅga could be the toponym? And is *śrī* a detachable honorific, in which case Yānaṁdimiriṅga could be the name? As evidence of Dvāravatī as the name of the principal city of the period and area, this is not unambiguous, since one could instead understand that the first city mentioned is in fact only compared with Hastinākhyapurī and with Viṣṇu's legendary city Dvāravatī. It is, however, also possible, as our translation suggests, that we have an enumeration of cities, the name of the first of which being uncertain, then Hastināpurī and Dvāravatī, and then a fourth place introduced with *etac ca*. Although the photograph sent by John Guy generally shows more details than any of the others, and contains a fragment at the end of the second line that is not in the other photographs, there is a fragment that it does not show that is in one of the photographs published in the Silpakorn journal. That fragment has the tops of the syllables *gdarasadma* in the fourth quarter of stanza 5. It is possible that the fragment in question is not in fact in the right place.

6.

There are numerous points out of doubt in the transcription here. We are assuming,

for instance, that the vowel mātrā for e (in *ekaṁ śatam*) is written above the letter like part of an ai. Furthermore, we seem to see a miniaturised final *m* dropped beneath the line at the end of *śatam*. Such dropped miniaturised letters (in this case perhaps with a *virāma*-mark beneath it) are found in the Indian subcontinent, but in Khmer epigraphy there may be no parallel. Particularly tentative is the reconstruction of the word *mahiṣikam* (which is lexicalised as *mahīṣika*mahīṣika).

Bibliography

First edited in Silpakorn Journal. Edited here again from photos, with integral translation into English, by Dominic Goodall etc.