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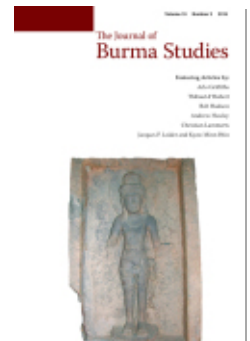
## Three More Sanskrit Inscriptions of Arakan: New Perspectives on Its Name, Dynastic History, and Buddhist Culture in the First Millennium

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# Three More Sanskrit Inscriptions of Arakan: New Perspectives on Its Name, Dynastic History, and Buddhist Culture in the First Millennium

Arlo Griffiths

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*Fondly dedicated to the memory of Pam Gutman,  
who drew me to the study of these inscriptions and  
donated her collection of estampages to the EFEO*

In his article “Some Sanskrit Inscriptions of Arakan,” published posthumously in 1944, the British Sanskrit scholar E.H. Johnston was the first to bring to the attention of the scholarly world the existence of a substantial epigraphic tradition in Sanskrit language on Burmese soil. While other parts of Burma have never yielded even a handful of inscriptions in Sanskrit,<sup>1</sup> significant further finds of Sanskrit epigraphic

1 I am so far aware of just four inscriptions wholly or partly composed in Sanskrit found in other parts of Burma: [1] the bilingual Sanskrit-Pyu inscription engraved on the base of a stone Buddha sculpture at the Śrīkṣetra Museum (Luce 1985/I: p. 65 with n. 22, p. 132; II: plates 16–7); [2] the fragments of a monolingual Sanskrit inscription said to have been found at Śrīkṣetra but of which no trace is to be found there nowadays (see Sircar 1976: 210–7, Gutman 2001: 109 n. 1; another fragment whose discovery was mentioned in the report of the Archaeological Survey of Burma

material in Arakan have continued to be made over the decades after Johnston's seminal study, gradually revealing more of the depth and breadth of this tradition. Some of these new finds have been published in the reports of the Archaeological Survey of Burma (1959, 1960, 1964, 1965), by the Arakanese scholar San Tha Aung (1974) and by the renowned Indian epigraphist D.C. Sircar (1957–58, 1967, 1976). Since then, no major publications have followed except a paper by Kyaw Minn Htin (2011), which focuses on a single type of inscription, namely the rather numerous short inscriptions comprising citation of the *ye dharmāḥ* formula alone, or accompanied by short dedicatory statements, often in very garbled language.

The Arakan tradition of Sanskrit epigraphy is limited chronologically to roughly the second half of the first millennium CE, and forms only the first chapter of the epigraphical history of Arakan.<sup>2</sup> After a gap of several centuries without any local epigraphical production, an Arakanese vernacular tradition starts in about the fourteenth century and forms the second chapter of this history. An overall survey of the epigraphical “archive” of Arakan has been written by Kyaw Minn Htin and Jacques Leider (forthcoming), and these same scholars have compiled an inventory of the entire corpus of Arakan epigraphy, in which each inscription has received an “A.” number.<sup>3</sup> The Sanskrit inscriptions among them are

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for 1960, p. 22 with fig. 13, may well belong to this same inscription); [3] a ruined inscription held in a small shed near the Tharaba gate at Pagan brought to my attention by Tilman Frasch, who kindly shared photos of an estampage revealing an almost entirely illegible inscription in a form of script called Gaudī that was current in eleventh-/twelfth-century Bengal; [4] the recently discovered Saw Lu inscription in Myittha, which at the top of the side also bearing Pali and Pyu texts reveals the extremely damaged remains of a Sanskrit one as well, again in such a Northeast Indian script.

2 The Pali and Pyu languages, each in its specific script (but see n77), play a marginal role in this chapter.

3 The attribution of such letter-coded numbers follows the well-established model of epigraphical inventories initiated and still maintained by the EFEO for the inscriptions of Cambodia (K.) and Campā (C.). See Gerschheimer 2003–04 and Griffiths *et al.* 2008–09.

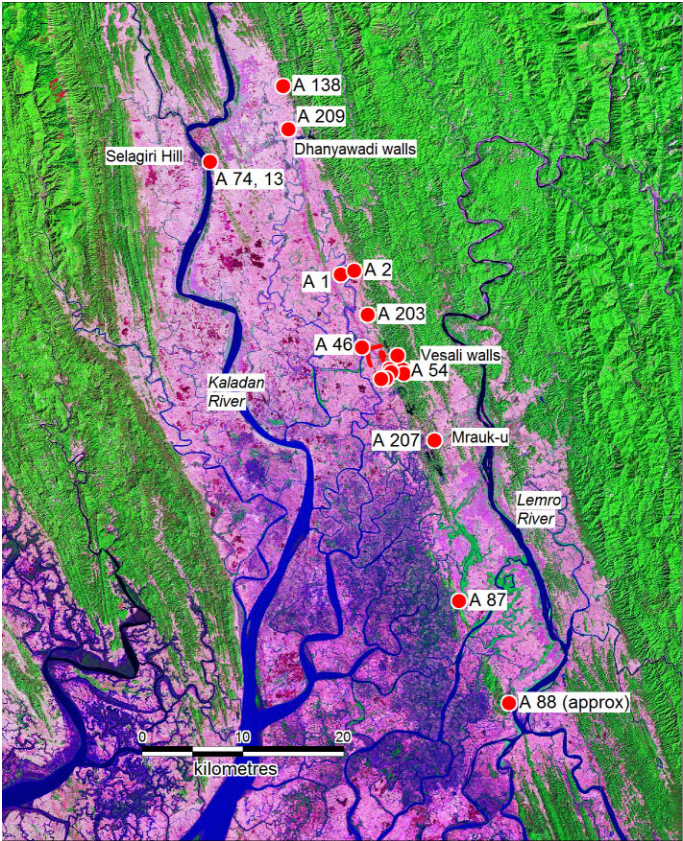
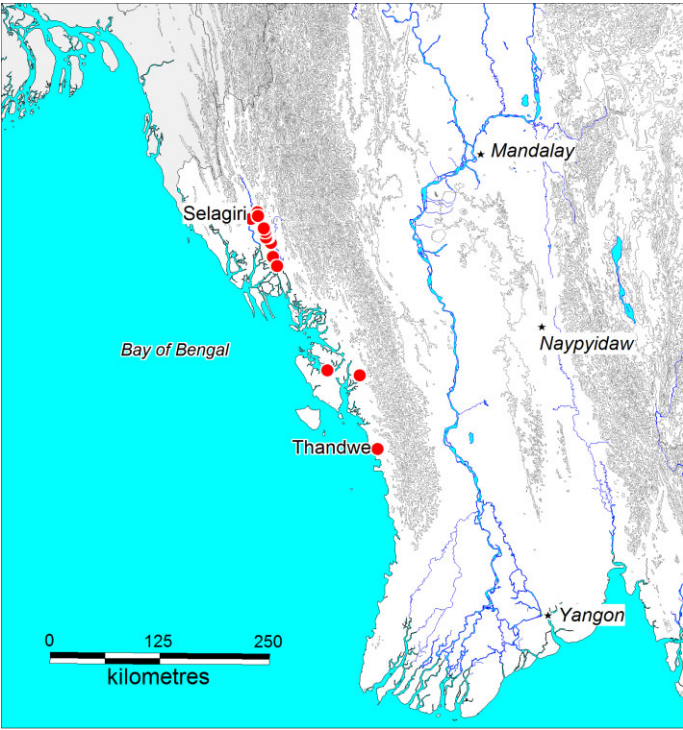
shown here on a few maps (figs. 1–3), which reveal that the vast majority of the relevant items have been found on the left bank of the Kaladan River, notably around the major early urban site of Vesālī. The total number of Sanskrit inscriptions so far recorded for the first millennium is about two dozen; among these less than a dozen constitute substantial (non-formulaic) texts. Scholarship so far has assumed the bulk of this small corpus to date to the sixth through eighth centuries, with outliers as early as the third century and as late as the eleventh century CE.

While a comprehensive publication and historical evaluation of the Arakan Sanskrit corpus is a long-term aim which the present author initially undertook in collaboration with the late P. Gutman<sup>4</sup> and is now pursuing on his own, the more modest aim of the present paper is to provide editions of three Sanskrit inscriptions so far unpublished,<sup>5</sup> in order to illustrate some of the significance of this material to the history of Arakan while simultaneously emphasizing the numerous challenges inherent in doing historical and philological justice to the Arakan Sanskrit corpus.

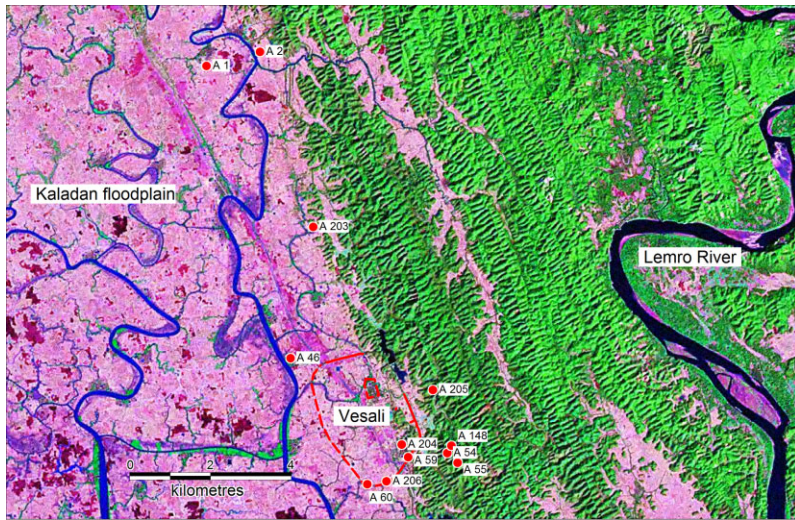
These challenges are formidable. One of the fundamental problems is the relatively very bad state of physical preservation of the inscriptions. With the exception of some *ye dharmāḥ* inscriptions, not a single epigraph has survived intact.

4 This scholar was consistently involved in the study of ancient Arakan since the 1970s. After her doctoral thesis, mentioned in the next footnote, she produced several research papers and a book dealing with various aspects of the history of this part of Burma. See the remembrance and list of publications included in this issue of the *Journal of Burma Studies*.

5 To be precise, an edition with translation of the third (A. 60) was already included in P. Gutman's doctoral thesis (1976), which is conveniently accessible online at <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/47122>. But considering that this work does not constitute a formal publication while the inscription in question is a well-preserved specimen and moreover of significance for the history of religion, it seemed worthwhile to include it here. Transliterations of uneven quality (without translation) of all three of the inscriptions to be published here were included in the more recent doctoral thesis of U Sandamuni Bhikkhu (2003).







**Figures 1–3** Maps by Bob Hudson showing the distribution of Sanskrit inscriptions in Arakan.

This means that all of the larger inscriptions, which in their original state would have comprised text of potential value for diverse forms of historical enquiry, come to us only in amputated state and, what is worse, are still often hard to decipher even in those parts not lost entirely. Indeed, in my experience working on inscriptions of South and Southeast Asia, I have not come across any other area where the ravages of time have dealt such crushing blows to the epigraphical record as is the case with first-millennium Arakan. For purposes of historical research, this basic problem is compounded by a total absence of absolute dates, partly due to physical damage suffered by the preserved inscriptions (see item A. 2 below), but no doubt also because this epigraphic tradition rarely recorded dates in any way to begin with, and when it did, preferred indicating regnal years (as in A. 1 below) rather than absolute dates.

The absence of absolute dates is far from unique if we look at other South and Southeast Asian epigraphical

traditions, and is characteristic among others for the epigraphic traditions of greater Bengal in the post-Gupta period.<sup>6</sup> It is indisputably with the first-millennium Bengal tradition that the neighboring tradition of Arakan shares the greatest number of features, such as language of epigraphic expression (Sanskrit), types of script used to represent this language (from late forms of Northern Brāhmī to Siddhamātṭkā), the general structure of the texts, and the mentioned absence of absolute dates. It is therefore to Bengal that we must look in the first instance to seek comparisons that might help to solve some of the problems we face in studying the Arakan corpus, especially to attempt relative dating of the inscriptions based on palaeographic comparison. But here we hit on further problems. Firstly, because next to many similarities, there is also an important difference between early Bengal epigraphy and our material: Bengal inscriptions are almost without exception engraved on metal supports, especially copper-plates, while Arakan inscriptions are, with few exceptions, engraved on stone. This reduces the feasibility of reliable palaeographic comparison. To make things worse, the absence of absolute dates on the Bengal side, after the Gupta period, means that we remain in doubt as to the dates of the most relevant early Bengal inscriptions. As long as the chronological framework is not much clearer there than it is on the Arakan side, even a very striking palaeographic agreement will generally not yield a solid chronological argument. I will return at the end of this article to the problem of dating. For now, it will suffice to note that the epigraphic material to be discussed can safely be assumed to fall within the very broad dating bracket of 500–900 CE.

## Philological Procedure

I will now first proceed to present the three selected new inscriptions one by one. A brief introduction will

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6 See Morrison 1970.

furnish for each item information about its provenance, present whereabouts, dimensions, and reproductions available for it.

In my editions, line numbers are indicated in parentheses and marked off from the text proper by use of bold typeface. When this yields a more effective presentation, prose parts of the inscriptions are run together into single paragraphs; verses are always indicated as such by a special layout and indication of the verse-type in square brackets. Since neither of the two inscriptions containing verses are legible or even preserved at all for their top parts, the total number of verses cannot be determined and hence verses remain unnumbered throughout. Observations on my readings and on necessary emendations are presented in footnotes. Slight deviations from the norm of Sanskrit orthography, of the type commonly found in manuscripts and inscriptions, are generally not indicated.

The following further editorial signs are used:

- (...) graphic elements whose reading is visually uncertain but philologically probable, or vice versa
- [...] graphic elements wholly lost or wholly unreadable on the stone but restorable on the basis of philological considerations
- /// textual loss at the left or right edge of the stone
- ⌌ one totally illegible or lost akṣara; if verse-context is clear, this sign is replaced by indications of the expected prosodic value of the lost akṣara (˘, –, ≡ indicating that one metrically short, long, or indifferent syllable must have been present)
- C one unreadable consonant element of an akṣara
- V one unreadable vowel element of an akṣara
- °V an akṣara vowel of the type V
- the virāma sign
- \* a consonant stripped of its inherent vowel by other or further means than the sole virāma sign (e.g. by reducing of the size of the akṣara or otherwise



differentiating its shape from the normal akṣara with inherent vowel)

A literal translation follows immediately after the edition of each inscription. Some comments on contents will be provided in footnotes, while discussion of major historical issues is reserved for a separate section of this article.

### Stone of Odein (A. 1)

Currently held in the Mrauk U Museum, Rakhine State, under nr. 48, this stone was found by Kyaw Htun Aung on December 2, 1986 in the water tank of the monastery of Odein <auīḥ thinḥ> village (Rakhine State, Sittwe Division, Mrauk U Township), about a half mile from the southern head of the Lan Mwee Taung <lañḥ mvī toñ> hills, on the bank of the Rann Chaung <ramḥ khyoñḥ> river. There are lots of potsherds on the ground all around the site of discovery. The meaning of the village's name is appropriately "[village] of potters." It lies opposite the village Prine Cha, where inscription A. 2 was found (see below). Carved in sandstone, showing some decoration, the shape of this stone (71.5 × 33 × 15.5 cm) suggests that it was once part of some structure, but it is difficult to determine what its architectural function would have been. A small portion at the right margin of the text is more deeply cut, at the height of lines 1–11, and in the poor state of preservation of these lines it is indeterminable if this irregularity in the shape of the stone predates or postdates the engraving of the text. No more than scattered words or akṣaras can be recovered with any degree of certainty for these lines.


At its library in Paris, the EFEO holds for this inscription an estampage numbered n. 2152 which, together with other estampages held by the EFEO in Chiang Mai and photos taken by Arlo Griffiths, has served as the basis for the edition proposed here. See figs. 4 and 5.

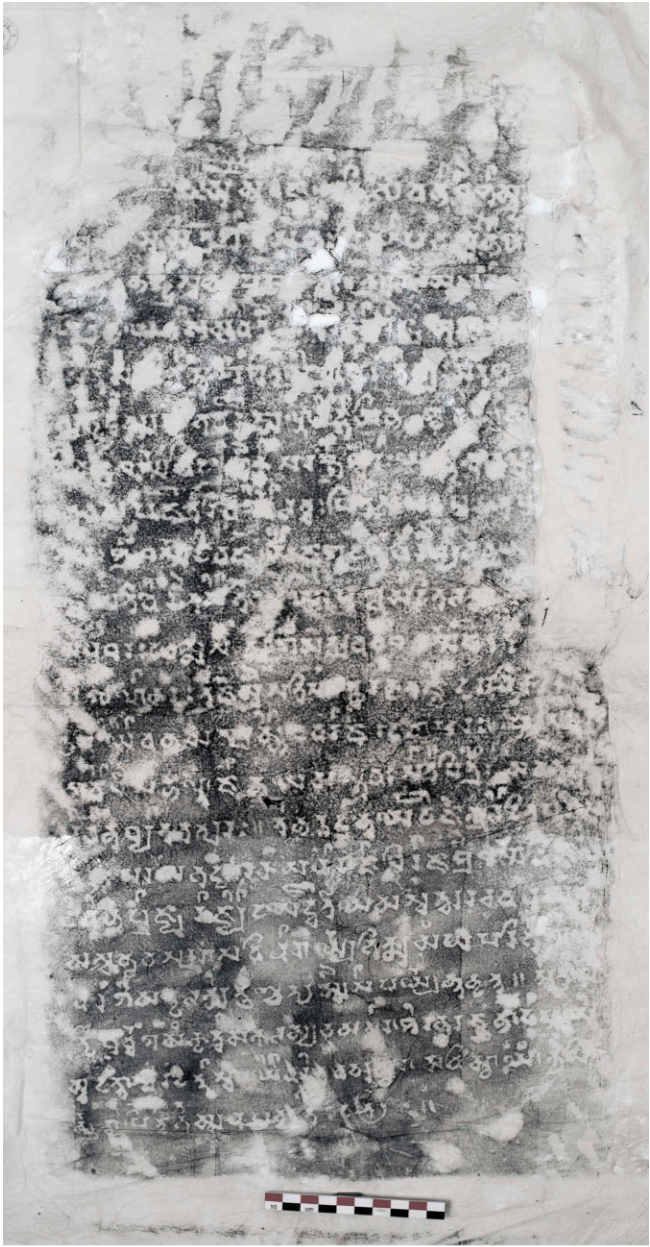


**Figure 4** The Odein inscription A. 1 (right) and the Prine Cha inscription A. 2 (left). Photo Arlo Griffiths.

## Text

- (1) □ //<sup>7</sup> □ (sustha) □ (ja) □ t[r]ibhuvanādhīśās t(r)ya-
- (2) dhva □ susmitaśo □ (pī)tāḥ pi(tar)āpada □ nā □
- (3) □□ ta(tprā)mvata □ pV □□ vāḥ □□ (līlā)maga(m) □□
- (4) □ tri □ (yat)āsukhavatī □ rapura □ Cārādraśu □□
- (5) □□□ sa □ tām(śva)Cāram gataṁ □□□□ ti □ ḥ □ s(o)-  
ḍaśa
- (6) □□□□□□ bhavad(v)i(ñ)maṇḍa(l)odgāmita □□□□□
- (7) □□□ dharmaCiCā (śr)īkāmaraṅgeśvaraḥ (ya) □□□□  
(pra)
- (8) □□□ pajitari (dharmmo) lavdhaḥ pitā □□□ pra(th)ita  
□

7 Perhaps there is no loss of any akṣaras at the beginning of this line, and we have rather an elongated form of the *siddham* sign: , right after the estampage starts to show a black background.



n. 2152 / A. 1

Figure 5 The Odein inscription A. 1. EFEO estampage n. 2152.

- (9) (tapah) śrīdharmmade(va)jayo jagadārttihārī Cyā  
 □□□  
 (10) nya □ bhiCedī tamo bhi □□ yaḥ puṇyāsāditala □□  
 (11) mahādhara °iva (pūmotyā) śrīmaty eva □□ (dharmma)  
 ji □□  
 (12) (vyogu)ṇā narah

[Anuṣṭubh]

t(e)jasvī matim(āñ) chūrakṛtaj(ñ)o = ~ Ci – =  
 (13) (rū)payovanasampanno devarāja °ivāparaḥ ||

[Anuṣṭubh]

pa(rama)[so](14)gato<sup>8</sup> (dh)īmān aṇḍajān(v)ayasambhavaḥ  
 mātāpitroḥ sa = = = (15) pādānudhyātatatparaḥ ||<sup>9</sup>

tena (rudr)ānvayavija(tp/kp)raroditapara(me(16)śvarā)-pa-  
 ramabhaṭṭ(ā)rakamahārājādhirājaśrīdharmmavijaya(17)de-  
 vena<sup>10</sup> prājya(r)ājyodayadvitīyasamvatsara(cavaha)□□(18)sa-  
 mvandhacamparāmavihārāryabhikṣusaṃghaparibhogā-

8 *pa(rama)[so]gato*: since the inscription elsewhere spells *o* for *au*, I restore here the spelling *sogato*, to be read as *saugato*.

9 *pādānudhyāta*°: in view of the ensuing element °*tatparaḥ*, this should perhaps be emended to *pādānudhyānatatparaḥ*. Cf. the copper-plate of Kāntideva of Harikelā (Majumdar 1941–42), ll. 14–15: *paramasaugato mātāpitṛpādānudhyātaḥ*, while Ferrier & Törzsök (2008: 95, 109n94) adduce an example of the expression *pādānudhyānarata*, with *rata* near synonymous to *tatpara*.

10 °*vija(tp/kp)prarodita*°: if the reading is correct, then it seems that it must be emended to °*viśvakprarodita*° or °*vidvatprarodita*°. Although the latter is arguably an easier emendation, the former is adopted here because it gives a better sense and moreover it seems a bit more likely that the problematic ligature starts with *k* than with *t*. — *para(meśvarā)*°: I cannot entirely exclude that the scribe actually wrote °*parameśvaro*, although the *e*-mātrā is consistently placed above the akṣara elsewhere in this inscription and to read *ro* I would have to assume rare use of the *e*-mātrā suspended to the left of the akṣara; space does seem sufficient to assume so, and use of the declined form in *-ro* was no doubt familiar to our author (cf. the copper-plate of Kāntideva, l. 15: *parameśvaro mahārājādhirājaḥ*). But I prefer to read °*parameśvarā*° which must be emended to °*parameśvara*°. In the Pāla corpus, *parameśvaraparamabhaṭṭārakamahārājādhirāja* is a set phrase.

ya<sup>11</sup> (19) h(ā)rag(am)<sup>12</sup> satṭlakṣettrañ<sup>13</sup> catussīmāparyyantan  
datta<sup>14</sup> || mātāpi(20)ṭṭipūrvvaṅgamam<sup>15</sup> kṛtv(ā) sakalasya ca  
sat(v)ārāśer anurajñānādāptaye<sup>16</sup>

[Anuṣṭubh]

(21) svadattām paradattām vā yo hareta vasundharā<sup>17</sup>  
sa viṣṭhāyām kṛmi(22)r bhūtvā piṭṭbhis saha pacyata °iti ḥ<sup>18</sup> ||

## Translation

(1–12) [too ruined to recover any coherent text]

(12) Having splendor, endowed with intelligence, a hero,  
grateful ... ; endowed with beauty and youthfulness, like  
a second king of the gods (Indra).<sup>19</sup>

11 °(cavaha)°: the meaning is unclear and the reading uncertain. The sign here tentatively read as *ca* does not seem identical in shape to the *ca* akṣaras elsewhere in the inscription. None of the alternatives (°e with head mark, a truncated *ka*) seems more convincing. — °camparāma°: correct °campārāma.

12 h(ā)rag(am): If the reading is correct, then it seems this must be emended to *vihāragam*.

13 satṭla°: correct *satṭṇa*°. Cf. the fixed expression *svasīmātṭṇayūtigocaraparyantaḥ* in the Pāla corpus. In the Munger copper-plate of Devapāla (Barnett 1925–26), ll. 38–39, we read more explicitly *svasīmātṭṇayūtigocaraparyantaḥ satalaḥ soddeśaḥ* [...] *satṭṇaḥ*...

14 datta: correct *dattam* or *dattam*.

15 mātāpiṭṭi°: the redundant spelling combining *i*-vocalisation with *r*-vocalisation is not unknown elsewhere. For another early Southeast Asian example, see *raktamṛittika*° in the inscription of Mahānāvika Budhagupta (Chhabra 1965: 22–6, esp. p. 22n3).

16 sat(v)ārāśer anurajñānādāptaye: correct *sattvarāśer anuttarajñānāvāptaye*. Cf. n23 below.

17 vasundharā: correct *vasundharām*.

18 °iti ḥ: the visarga here functions as punctuation sign (cf. Kudo 2004). See discussion of the shape of °i below, under Palaeographic Comparison of the New Inscriptions.

19 This verse lists a number of standard characteristics of the ideal Indian king. Cf. *Mahābhārata* 12.84.014 *kuḷinaḥ satyasampannas titikṣur dakṣa ātmavān | śūrah kṛtajñāḥ satyaś ca śreyasaḥ pārtha lakṣaṇam ||*; *Pañcatantra* 2.126 *utsāhasampannam adīrghasūtram kriyāvidhijñāṁ vyasaneṣv asaṅgam | śūrah kṛtajñāṁ dīrghasauhrdam ca lakṣmīḥ svayam vāñchati vāsahetoḥ ||*.



- (13–15) Devout Buddhist, wise, born in the Bird-lineage,<sup>20</sup> eagerly engaged in meditating on the feet<sup>21</sup> of his mother and father ...
- (15–19) By him, the overlord of great kings Śrī Dharmavijayadeva, paramount sovereign, paramount lord (*parameśvara*) who has given cause for crying throughout the Rudra-lineage,<sup>22</sup> on the occasion of *cavaha*XX (?) in the second year of the rise of his bountiful reign, gave the land with the produce inside the monastery, up to the four boundaries, for the maintenance of the noble monks of the Campārāma monastery.
- (19–20) [He did this] for the attainment of supreme knowledge by the entire host of beings, beginning with his parents.<sup>23</sup>
- (21–22) He who would rob land, whether given by himself or by another, is reborn as a worm in excrement and is cooked (in the pits of hell) together with his ancestors.<sup>24</sup>

20 See my comments below on this and other lineages mentioned in the Arakan corpus.

21 The use of the expression *pādānudhyāta* is problematic here due to the combination with *taṭparaḥ*, and the problem can be resolved with the emendation proposed in n9. By translating this occurrence as “meditating on the feet,” I go against the conclusions of Ferrier and Törzsök (2008) who admit this interpretation only for post-tenth-century documents. As we will see below, this inscription probably dates to the sixth or seventh century. The lacuna, however, makes it impossible to rule out with certainty that the author here intended “blessed by the feet of his parents and zealous in ...”.

22 In my interpretation, the compound ending in *prarodita* is of the inverted *bahuvrīhi* type (Wackernagel & Debrunner 1957: §116a). Our author is clearly playing on the other meaning of *parameśvara*, namely as a name of Śiva.

23 This sentence represents in truncated form the “common Mahāyāna formula” (Johnston 1944: 366, Schopen 1979) that is attested fully in an inscription engraved in the same type of script on a bell from Pyedaung monastery (A. 203): (1) *deyadharmmo yaṃ śākyabhikṣor bhūteḥ ya catra punyaṃ tad bhavatu mātāpitr(p)ū[rva]ṅgamam kṛtvā* (2) *cāryyopādhyāyānām sarvasatvānāṃ ca °anuttarajñānāvāptaye °iti* || (cited in my own reading, somewhat improved vis-à-vis that published by Johnston 1944: 382).

24 Lines 21–2 contain a standard admonitory formula attested widely in Indian epigraphy. See Sircar 1965: 196 nr. 132 for very extensive references.

## Stela of Prine Cha Hill (A. 2)

Currently held at the State Archaeological Museum, Mrauk U, Rakhine State, under nr. 39, this stone was found on December 1, 1980 by Kyaw Htun Aung beside a hill outside of Prine Cha <pruiṇḥ khyā> village (Rakhine State, Sittwe Division, Mrauk U Township), on the bank of the Rann Khyaung <ramḥ khyoṇ>. This village lies opposite the village Odein, where inscription A. 1 was found (see above). There are clear traces (in the form of piles of brick) of the former presence of a structure (presumably a *stūpa*) atop this hill. The shape of the stela (80 × 45 × 12 cm), carved in sandstone, suggests that it was intended to stand freely against a wall. A significant, roughly triangular, portion of the top left is lost, causing the loss of many akṣaras at the start of lines 1–13.

At its library in Paris, the EFEO holds for this inscription estampages numbered n. 2154, 2155 and 2156. Together with other estampages held by the EFEO in Chiang Mai and photos taken by Christian Lammerts, these have served as the basis for the edition proposed here (see figs. 4 and 6).

### Text

- (1) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□///pūjitaṃ dayāpadāṃ jaga(d)-  
upade(ś)□□ṇam(ya)<sup>25</sup>
- (2) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□///sya pādāmvujanirmmalāṃhi-  
nā<sup>26</sup> paramasogato
- (3) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□///(cū)ḍamaṇimahārājādhirājaśrī-  
mān dharmmā<sup>27</sup>

25 °upade(ś)□□ṇam(ya): restore °upadeśakam praṇamya? Only the faintest trace of some conjunct consonant is visible after *m*.

26 °nirmmalāṃhinā: the reading seems secure but does not make sense; emend °nityālabhina?

27 dharmmā-: the long final *ā* is unmistakable. Therefore, none of the names dharmmacandra, dharmmavijaya, and dharmmasūra mentioned in the Shittaung Pagoda pillar inscr. (A. 71), st. XXXIV, XXXIX, XLII, come into question for filling in part of the lacuna at the start of l. 4. The only suitable name known to me from a possibly relevant historical context is that of Dharmākara, a ruler of some indeterminate territory in what is now Southeast Bengal and/or possibly also Arakan known from a small number of coins (Kathotia 2006: 61, 62, 69–70).

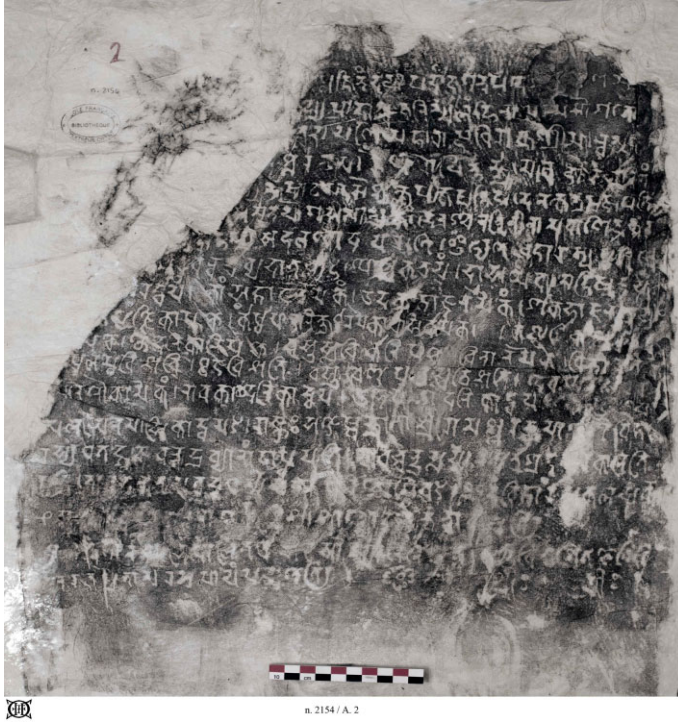


Figure 6 The Prine Cha inscription A. 2. EFEO estampage n. 2154.

- (4) ████████████████████///śūraṁmā██(royir tta)dgrāme<sup>28</sup> vi-  
hāra<sup>29</sup> (kāri)taṁ  
(5) ████████████████████/// °āṣāḍhamāse śuklapakṣapratipadi  
nakṣatraprajāpati  
(6) ████████████████████/// °am(r)tayogasamāyuktaṁ | denūs<sup>30</sup>  
ca nandinī nāma vāñija██

28 śūraṁmā██(royir tta)dgrāme: three akṣaras are entirely unreadable, but the first can probably be restored as *kṣa* based on the occurrence of what appears to be the same name in l. 14, there too alas illegible for the two akṣaras after *mā*. My reading of the akṣaras preceding *dgrāme* does not yield a clear sense and is for this reason proposed only very tentatively.

29 *vihāra*: understand *vihāraṁ*, unless one ought to read *viḥāre*.

30 *denūs*: correct *dhenus* (or *dhenūs*).

- (7) □□□□□□□□□□/(pudgaha)sya<sup>31</sup> (sa)dulavodaparāṇi<sup>32</sup> |  
 °i(d)yate<sup>33</sup> vihārasya (pra)ti□  
 (8) □□□□□□□□□□/(guru)vandhadravya dātavyam\* | (dh)o-  
 (ti)katrayam<sup>34</sup> | dāsa-m-eka<sup>35</sup> | mahiṣadvayam  
 (9) □□□□□□□□□□/radvayam | kāmsabhājanam ekaṁ | °udaka-  
 bhājanam ekaṁ | śākabhājanatrayam  
 (10) □□□□□□□□□□/(pa)ñjikā pañca | kāṣṭhāpha(la)niktradhāra-  
 m-eka<sup>36</sup> | vāsikā-m-eka<sup>37</sup> | |<sup>38</sup> kaṭ(ṭ)ā(r)ikā(-m-ekā | )<sup>39</sup>  
 □  
 (11) □□□□□□□□□□/ pañca | chedanikāni pañca | vastrasūcikāni  
 pañca | vitānam eka | vi(tāna) □□  
 (12) □□□□□□□□□□/ p(r)alamva viśati | dhvaja viśati | vastrakhaṇḍa-  
 p(r)a[la]mva triśati<sup>40</sup> | deva(ghara) □□□□

31 (pudgaha)sya: if the reading is correct, then this sequence must probably be emended to *pudgalasya*.

32 As few of the preceding segments on this line yield a clear sense, it is hard to distinguish between akṣaras whose reading is secure from those which are uncertain.

33 °i(d)yate: if the reading is correct, then it seems necessary to correct *īdyate*, although the meaning is somewhat problematic.

34 (dh)o(ti)ka°: the reading is extremely uncertain. D. Acharya suggests as possible alternative *po(ñca)ka°*; reading *poñcika°* also seems possible. Neither of these alternatives is a known word, but one can imagine a connection with the base *puñch/poñch* “to clean (shoes)” attested in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (Edgerton 1953, Dictionary, pp. 346, 354).

35 dāsa-m-eka: for *dāsa ekaḥ*. Here and several times below, I interpret -m- as standing in the function of hiatus bridger.

36 kāṣṭhāpha(la)°: the apparent circular sign resembling an anusvāra on top of the first syllable is perhaps placed too far to the left to really be one, and I consider it more likely to be an accidental irregularity on the stone. We should probably understand something like *kāṣṭhaphalaka* “plank of wood.”

37 °eka | vāsikā°: the *prima facie* reading is with long ā sign instead of a daṇḍa, hence °ekavāsikā°. But the context suggests we have here a word derived from *vāsi*. See my note to the translation.

38 eka | | : space is intentionally left blank between the two daṇḍas.

39 kaṭ(ṭ)ā(r)ikā: the reading is uncertain, but the word *kaṭṭārikā* occurs in the new inscription of Vainyagupta (Furui, forthcoming), l. 46.

40 viśati ... viśati ... triśati: correct *vimśati ... vimśati ... trimśati*.

- ## Translation

- [202.120.237.38] Project MUSE (2025-08-05 18:03 GMT) Fudan University



pot; three vegetable platters; five ... ; one stand for a wooden washboard (?);<sup>46</sup> one adze;<sup>47</sup> one cutter; five blades; five needles for cloth; one canopy; twenty garlands (? , *pralamba*) ... for the monastery; twenty banners; thirty garlands (?) of portions of cloth; ... ; ... one boat (? , *naukā*); two covers for boatmen (? , *nāvaka* = *nāvika*); two double covers; two ... *māsika*...

(14–15) That elder brother of the king will give to the Śr(ī)-rāmaśūra(kṣa)māXX-monastery the bound goods (?) of that village.

(15–16) As long as the moon, sun, lunar mansions, planets and stars abide, so long ... [will last] that fine (? , śiva) foundation (?) for the *dharma*.

(16–17) ...

(18–19) immunity ... being protected ... ; ... , destruction befalls man, ghost, and god.

## Stone Slab from Vesālī (A. 60)

Currently held in a cabinet in the bronze room at the State Archaeological Museum, Mrauk U, Rakhine State, under nr. 393, this stone was found before 1969 “near the south-west Veśālī moat” (Gutman 1976: 99). It represents only a fragment (23 × 18 cm) of the original, which would have been taller, an indeterminate number of lines having been lost.

At its library in Paris, the EFEO holds for this inscription the estampage numbered n. 2172. Together with my photos

46 This translation assumes the emendation *kāṣṭhaphalakaniktradhāra*. I owe the interpretation given here to the anonymous reviewer for the *Journal of Burma Studies*, who explains *niktra* as derived from the root *nij* “to wash,” and proposes that the entire expression corresponds to Pali *cīvāra-dhovana-phalakaka* at *Samantapāsādikā* 1244.4 on *Vinayaṭṭhaka*, *Cullavagga* 170.26–35 (references after the Pali Text Society editions).

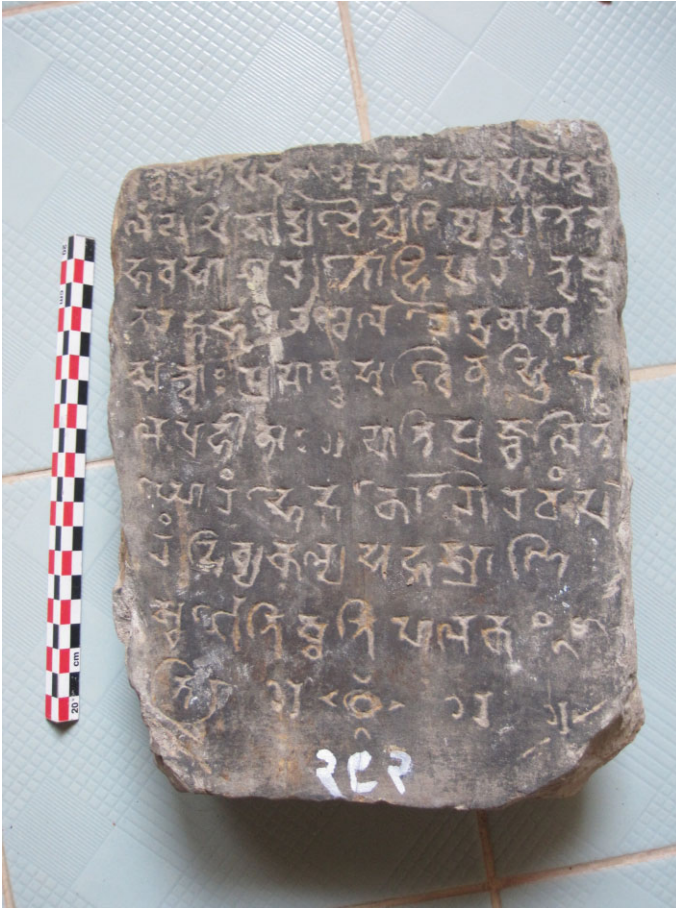
47 Because it is difficult to see any connection with the technical term *āvāsika*, denoting a monk in permanent residence of a monastery (Silk 2008: 150–1), I prefer reading a *daṇḍa* before *vāsikā-m-eka*, and propose to interpret *vāsikā* as synonym of *vāsi*, which occurs in a similar context in the new inscription of Vainyagupta (Furui, *forthc.*), l. 45. See for further details my commentary below.

taken in 2012, this has served as the basis for the edition proposed here, differing only slightly from the one included in Gutman 1976. Since the bottom of the inscription is preserved while the top is lost, line numbering is here arranged in negative order counting upwards (see figs. 7 and 8).

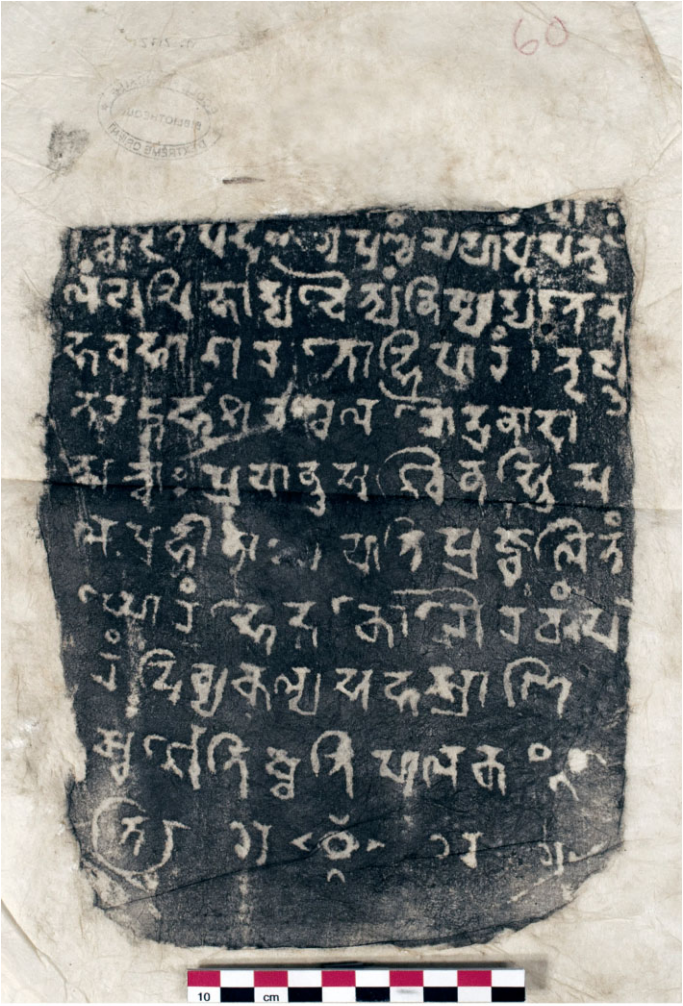
### *Text*

(-11) /// □ prāpnu-

(-10) [va]ntv amṛtapadam· ||



**Figure 7** The Vesālī inscription A. 60. Photo Arlo Griffiths.



n. 2172 / A. 60

Figure 8 The Vesālī inscription A. 60. EFEO estampage n. 2172.

[Vasantatilakā]

puṇyaṁ mayāptam atu(-9)laṁ yaṁ ihādyā caityaṁ  
 niṣpādyā tena (-8) bhavasāgarato hi pāraṁ |  
 tṛṣṇ(ā)(-7)taraṅgabhr̥śacañcalaraudranādā(-6)t  
 satvāḥ prayāntu sukhinas trima(-5)laprahīnāḥ<sup>48</sup> ||

[Anuṣṭubh]

yāti prajvalitaṁ (-4) ghoram bhedako rauravaṁ pā(-3)raṁ  
 divyakalpasahasrāṇi (-2) svarge tiṣṭhati pālaka °i(-1)ti || ॐ || ||

## Translation

... they shall attain the immortal state.

The incomparable merit that I have obtained by building a shrine here, may it serve [all] beings to pass happily and freed from the three stains to the other shore of the ocean of existence, which is strongly wavering and dreadfully noisy due to the waves of desire.

The transgressor [of this foundation] goes to the burning dreadful Raurava [hell]; he who protects [it] abides in heaven through thousands of divine aeons.

## The Contents of the New Inscriptions

### Historical Geography: Kāmarāṅga

Inscription A. 1 opens with eleven lines from which little information can be recovered, but which do include the tantalizing word *kāmarāṅgeśvara*. The word *kāmarāṅga*, also existing in a variant *karmaraṅga*,<sup>49</sup> in Sanskrit denotes the star fruit

48 °prahīnāḥ: in chaste Sanskrit, this should be °prahīṇāḥ.

49 This equivalence follows from Sanskrit lexicographical sources such as the Śabdakalpadrūma (Rājā Rādhākānta Deva 1825–57/II: 47) where *kāmarāṅga* is called the “bhāṣā,” i.e., vernacular, form of *karmaraṅga*. It is perhaps useful to point out that this understanding of the relationship between the two variants is not necessarily in accordance with historical reality.

(*Averrhoa carambola* L.),<sup>50</sup> and known as a toponym too. The toponym has been subjected to a very learned study by S. Lévi (1923),<sup>51</sup> whose argument tended to identify it with the site Langkasuka on the east coast of the Malay peninsula, known principally from Chinese sources and archaeological finds. The chapter dedicated to this ancient polity in the recent summary of historical-archaeological research on the Malay Peninsula by M. Jacq-Hergoualc'h (2002, chapter seven) does not refer to Lévi's theory at all. I am unsure why Lévi's identification of Langkasuka with Karmaraṅga/Kāmaraṅga—and even a third variant: Carmaraṅga—of Sanskrit sources remains unmentioned, but it is hard to avoid the impression that it is merely because it escaped subsequent scholarly attention in this field.<sup>52</sup>

Two inscriptions of Burma that have come to light since Lévi wrote seem to require a re-interpretation of the Indian textual data that he collected. The first is the present inscription, from which we alas learn nothing more with certainty than that Kāmaraṅga was a name known in ancient Arakan, whether as plant-name or as toponym; the second is the fragmentary Sanskrit inscription found in Śrīkṣetra several decades ago and partly deciphered by D.C. Sircar.<sup>53</sup> It refers repeatedly to a “lord of Kalaśapura” (*kalaśapureśvara*) called Śrī Parameśvara, and—judging from palaeography—is roughly contemporary with our inscription. The second gives some reason to favor the hypothesis that Kāmaraṅgeśvara in the first denoted the “lord of Kāmaraṅga,” i.e., that Kāmaraṅga was a place name.

50 See <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/carambola.html>. The webpage reproduces Morton 1987: 125–8.

51 An English translation of Lévi's article was published as Lévi (1929), and it is this English version that will be cited henceforward.

52 Lévi's arguments were summarized approvingly by R.C. Majumdar (1937–38/I: 73–5). The seminal contributions of Wheatley (1956, 1961), however, ignore Lévi, presumably by mere inadvertence, and this could well be why subsequent literature likewise ignores Lévi.

53 See for references n2 above, item 2.



Let us now look at the most important Sanskrit textual citations furnished by Lévi, taken from T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī's edition of the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa*:<sup>54</sup>

*Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* 20 (vol. I, p. 206)

vidikṣu bhairavaṃ nāde ūrdhvaṃ uttārato bhavet |  
 kāmarūpeśvaro hanyā gauḍādhyakṣeṇa sarvadā ||  
 lauhityāt parato ye vai janādhyakṣātha jīvinah<sup>55</sup> |  
 kalaśāhvāḥ kārmarāṅgāś<sup>56</sup> ca sāmataṭyāś<sup>57</sup> ca vaṅgakāḥ ||  
 "If there is a terrifying sound in the intermediate directions, upward, northward, the lord of Kāmarūpa will inevitably be killed by the overlord of Gauḍa; [so also] the lord of the people and dependents (*jīvin* = *upajīvin*?) beyond the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra), the ones called Kalaśa, those of Karmaraṅga, of Samataṭa and of Vaṅga."

*Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* 22 (vol. I, p. 232)

asurāṇāṃ bhaved vācā gauḍapaṇḍrodbhavā sadā |  
 yathā gauḍajanaśreṣṭhaṃ rutaṃ śabdavibhūṣitam |

54 For some more information on this extremely rich text, and for the argument in favor of the assumption that its original title, more commonly cited as *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, in fact contained the element °śrīya°, see Delhey 2012. On the complex issue of the dating of its various parts, in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan versions, see Matsunaga 1985. For present purposes, it is sufficient to state that the cited passages may be assumed to transmit geographical knowledge in Northeastern India of about the last quarter of the first millennium CE. The Sanskrit text is notoriously difficult to translate, and my renderings of the cited passages are no more than approximations of what might have been intended. I thank Péter-Dániel Szántó for his several suggestions sent to me by email in January 2015, helping me to try to understand the meaning of the passages I cite in this article, and Martin Delhey for having checked the Sanskrit manuscripts available for these passages, an effort that alas has yielded virtually no new philological insights.

55 *janādhyakṣātha jīvinah*: em. (Szántó), *janādhyakṣātha jīvinā* Ed. A palm-leaf and two paper mss. consulted by Delhey confirm the reading *janā*° for the first word.

56 *kalaśāhvāḥ kārmarāṅgāś*: em., *kalaśāhvā carmarāṅgāś* Ed.

57 *sāmataṭyāś*: em., *samotadyāś* Ed. A palm-leaf manuscript consulted by Delhey, reading *samataṭyāś*, lends support to my emendation.

tathā daityagaṇaśreṣṭham<sup>58</sup> rutaṁ cāpi niyojayet ||  
 teṣāṁ paryaṭantānām samantānām ca purojavām |  
 yakṣarākṣasapretānām nāgāṁś cāpi sapūtanām |  
 sarveṣām asurapakṣāṇā vaṅgasamataṭāśrayāt<sup>59</sup> ||  
 harikele kalaśamukhye ca carmaraṅge hy aśeṣataḥ |  
 sarveṣām janapadām vā tathā teṣāṁ tu kalpayet ||  
 “Always the speech indigenous to Pauṇḍra in Gauḍa is that  
 of the Asuras. As the best cry of the people of Gauḍa,  
 adorned with words, so also he should consider (? , *niyo-*  
*jayet*) the best cry of the horde of demons. And because all  
 those wandering servants, Yakṣas, Rākṣasas, ghosts, ser-  
 pents and goblins, siding with the demons, each take  
 refuge in Vaṅga and Samataṭa, in Harikela, the best [city  
 called] Kalaśa and Carmaraṅga, he should so imagine [the  
 speech] of all those regions.”

*Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* 31 (vol. II, p. 332)

ṛṣiṇām tu kāmārūpī tu vācā viśvarūpiṇām |  
 pañcābhijñām<sup>60</sup> tu sā vācā ṛṣiṇām parikalpitā ||  
 yā tu sāmataṭī<sup>61</sup> vācā yā ca vācā harikelikā |  
 avyaktām asphuṭām<sup>62</sup> caiva ḍakārapariniśritā ||  
 lakārabahulā yā vācā paisācīvācam ucyate |  
 karmaraṅgākhyadvīpeṣu nāḍikerasamudbhavā<sup>63</sup> ||  
 dvīpavāruṣake caiva nagnavālisamudbhavā |  
 yavadvīpe vā<sup>64</sup> sattveṣu tadanyadvīpasamudbhavā ||  
 vācā rakārabahulā tu vācā asphuṭatām gatā |  
 avyaktā niṣṭhurā caiva sakrodhām pretayoniṣu ||  
 “The variegated speech of Kāmārūpa is that of the sages.  
 That speech is fitting for the seers endowed with the five  
 super-knowledges. The speech of Samataṭa and of Harikela  
 is indistinct and unclear, being pervaded (? *pariniśrita*) with  
 sounds ḍ. And the language existing in the (is)lands called

58 *daityagaṇaśreṣṭham*: em., *daityagaṇā śreṣṭham* Ed.

59 °*samataṭāśrayāt*: em., °*sāmataṭāśrayāt* Ed.

60 *pañcābhijñām*: em. (Szántó), *pañcābhijñām* Ed.

61 *sāmataṭī*: em., *sāmā taṭī* Ed.

62 *avyaktām asphuṭām*: em., *avyaktām sphuṭām* Ed.

63 *nāḍikerasamudbhavā*: em. (Lévi silently), *nāḍikesaramudbhavā* Ed.

64 *yavadvīpe vā*: ed. (Lévi silently), *yavadvīpivā* Ed.

Karmaraṅga and Nāḍikera is called Paisāci because it is rich in sounds *l*. And the language existing among the Naked-Vāḷins of Vāruṣaka-island, and one existing among creatures on Yava-island or other islands is rich in sounds *r* and [hence] becomes unclear, indistinct, rough, angry toward ghost-wombs.”

To these passages we must add another one which could not yet be used by Lévi because it appeared in a volume published only in 1925:

*Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* 53<sup>65</sup> (vol. III, p. 648)

sidhyate ca tadā tārā yakṣarāt caiva mahābalaḥ |  
harikele karmaraṅge ca kāmarūpe kalaśāhvaye ||

“And then Tārā is realized, with the Yakṣa-king Mahābala, in Harikela, Karmaraṅga, Kāmarūpa and [the city] called Kalaśa.”

Furthermore, Lévi mentions (1929: 107) that “the *Bṛhatsamhitā*, XIV, 9, in its catalogue of the peoples of the South-East (āgneyī) combines Vṛṣa-Nālikera-Carmadvīpaḥ; Kern (J.R.A.S., n.s., V, 83) has translated this as “The Island of Bulls, of Cocoas, of Tree-barks,” but the mention of *Nālikera* by the side of *carma* clearly proves that Carmadvīpa corresponds here to Carma- or Karma-raṅgadvīpa of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.”<sup>66</sup> The names Karmaraṅga, Carmaraṅga,

65 On the date of chapter 53, see Sanderson (2009: 300n129): “The prophetic history of Indian Buddhism, the *Rājavyākaraṇa*, chapter 53 of the published *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa*, cannot be earlier than the late eighth century since it knows of the Pāla king Gopāla (r. c. 750–775) (53.628; and 53.816: *tataḥ pareṇa \*bhūpālo gopālo* [em.: *bhūpālā gopālā* Ed.] *dāsajīvinaḥ | bhaviṣyati*). Since it does not mention his successor Dharmapāla it is unlikely to be later.” Our verse occurs in a section to which Jayaswal (1934: 72–73 and ६६७) has given the title “Religious Practice in the East, South, Insulin-dia, and Further India.”

66 The passage corresponds to *Bṛhatsamhitā* 54.108 in the edition of H. Kern (1864–65). Lévi (1929: 105) also discusses two passages from Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* that mention the adjective *kāmararaṅga*, but these throw no light on the geographical situation of Karmaraṅga. He finally cites the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and a famous illustrated Nepalese manuscript for attestations of a Kalaśa(vara)pura.

or even Carma can, in turn, all safely be considered variants of the name Kāmarāṅga. We have seen a series of passages from the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* where they are associated repeatedly with other toponyms:

Toponym	Current Identifications <sup>67</sup>	Named
Kalaśa	Martaban	3×
Harikela	Chittagong area	3×
Samataṭa	Comilla area	3×
Gauḍa	Present Bihar and West Bengal	2×
Kāmarūpa	Assam	2×
Nārikela	Nicobar islands	2×
Vaṅga	Southern Bengal	2×
Vṛṣa/Vāruṣa	Barus	2×

I have listed in the table only those toponyms associated contextually more than once with Karmaraṅga or variants thereof. All of the names identifiable here situate us clearly in and around Bengal, while a certain southeastward progression is noticeable from Gauḍa in north India to Barus on the northwest coast of Sumatra, not to mention Yavadvīpa, whose identification is contested and may not always have indicated the same place for each Sanskrit author, but in my opinion here most probably designated Java (see Griffiths 2013). Unless Kalaśa and our Karmaraṅga/Kāmarāṅga stand for places in present Burma, this large sector of the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal will be unrepresented. The identification of Kalaśa(pura) “Pot (city)” as Martaban was proposed by Gutman (2001), who gave a plausible but non-conclusive argument and did not offer an explanation for why the single inscription mentioning this place name—the Śrīkṣetra inscription mentioned above—was found at Śrīkṣetra and not at Martaban.

67 On Kalaśa, see Gutman 2001. On Nārikela, see Chakravarti 1998. On Vṛṣa/Vāruṣa, see Wolters 1967: 186 and Perret 2009: 543n1. On all other toponyms, see Ghosh 2011.

In view of the fact that the name Kalaśapura is documented at Śrīkṣetra while the name Kāmaraṅga is documented in Arakan, and in view of Karmaraṅga's close association with Kalaśapura, with Harikela, and with Samataṭa, it seems most natural to think for the identification of Kalaśapura and Karmaraṅga/Kāmaraṅga of the two principal centers of Buddhist culture of first-millennium Burma, that is Arakan and Śrīkṣetra, neither of whose names are otherwise recorded in local sources for this period.<sup>68</sup> The Sanskrit name Karmaraṅga/Kāmaraṅga may be seen as an attempt to render in the guise of this language an indigenous name: Lévi (1929: 112ff.) already suspected the presence in this name, as well as that of Kāmarūpa, of a non-Aryan "pre-formative" *kam*. Furthermore, it may be that Old Burmese sources have preserved the same name in Burmese guise as *kam ram* or *kamḥ yaṃ*, again possible designations of Arakan.<sup>69</sup>

68 It must be admitted that some variant of the name Śrīkṣetra was already current by the seventh century, but it is attested with certainty only in Chinese sources. See Griffiths and Lammerts (2015: 996), for a brief overview of the relevant evidence. I imagine that the religious name Śrīkṣetra may have coexisted with a political designation of roughly the same locality as Kalaśapura. But of course I cannot exclude that the latter designated some other locality further south in present Burma. See Fräsch (2002: 62) for some possibly relevant Pagan-period evidence on the importance of pottery in lower Burma.

69 The account of the fall of Śrīkṣetra in the Burmese chronicles mentions an expedition to the *kamḥ yaṃ* country, which Luce (1985/I: 51n25) provisionally identifies as "possibly North Arakan Mahāmuni." As mentioned elsewhere by the same scholar (1959: 56), a name *kam ram*, which is likely to be an earlier spelling of the same toponym, is found in Pagan epigraphy. For the inscription in question, dated 598 BE (1236 CE), see Nyein Maung et al. 1972–2013/I: 293, line 36; it is number 273 in Duroiselle's list (1921), and plate 94a in portfolio 1 of *Inscriptions of Burma* (Luce and Pe Maung Tin 1934–56). Luce expressed some hesitation as to the authenticity of the inscription saying that it "looks original, but the dates in it are so wild that one has a certain hesitation in accepting its unsupported evidence." I thank Christian Lammerts for all the references to primary and secondary source material furnished in this note. He further informs me by email: "I have located quite a number of additional literary/chronicle references to *kam ram* and variants. These all date to c. 1500 CE or later. The name *rakhuin*



I offer these hypotheses here only as possibilities to be explored in further research, but at the very least my identification of Kāmarāṅga as Arakan seems to be a viable alternative for the current identification as Langkasuka, going back to the work of Lévi and Wheatley.<sup>70</sup>

### *History of Buddhism: Monastic Life and the Role of Mahāyāna*

Inscriptions A. 1 and A. 2 are the first Arakan Sanskrit inscriptions on record to deal with endowments to specific named monasteries. The Odein inscription concerns the endowment of land to the Campārāma *vihāra* for the upkeep of the *saṅgha*. The Prine Cha inscription records a donation to a monastery the name of which is only partly preserved but seems to have started with the element Rāmaśūra.

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itself appears first only in the 13th c. in central Burmese inscriptions, always in references to people, not to a specific territory or kingdom." See also Fräsch 2002: 70.

70 My interpretation seems to fit equally well, if not better, with the toponymic evidence from Chinese authors of the seventh century, among whom Xuanzang (Wheatley 1956: 397, 1961: 256), who wrote: "Thence [from *Samataṭa*] north-eastwards is the kingdom of *Shih-li-ch'a-ta-lo* (Śrīkṣetra). Next to the south-east, in a recess of the ocean, is the kingdom of *Chia-mo-lang-chia* [Kāmalāṅka]. Next to the east is the kingdom of *To-lo-po-ti* [Dvāravātī]. Next to the east is the kingdom of *I-shang-na-pu-lo* [Īśānapura]. Next to the east is the kingdom of Mo-ho-chan-po [Mahācampa], which is the same as *Lin-i*." Lévi (1929: 104) had already proposed that the Chinese rendering might rather represent Kāmarāṅga. It seems to me that Wheatley (1956: 406–7, 1961: 262–3) was mistaken to dismiss the evidence of the seventh-century Chinese sources as distorted, which led him to conflate the *Chia-mo-lang-chia* (迦摩浪迦, Pinyin: Jiamolangjia) known to the authors of these sources, with Langkasuka on the Malay peninsula known with certainty only from significantly later sources. For the sake of completeness, I must mention that the name *kāmarāṅga* figures also in the Cambodian Sanskrit inscriptions K. 56 (ninth century) and K. 1294 (pre-Angkorian), certainly as toponym in the former, possibly in the latter. The contexts are insufficient to exclude the possibility that these passages denote Arakan, although it seems more plausible to assume, in the face of the Cambodian epigraphic evidence, that the ancient landscape of mainland Southeast Asia knew more than one Kāmarāṅga.

The second inscription is unique for the unusually precise manner in which this inscription records the details of the endowment—unusually, that is, for Sanskrit epigraphy, where such business matters tend to be dealt with in a vague, formulaic manner. The manner in which the business portion is recorded here is much more reminiscent of the way in which such information is presented in vernacular epigraphy of Southeast Asia, exemplified very well by the corpus of Old Burmese inscriptions.<sup>71</sup> The only example in a Sanskrit inscription of a comparable list of items endowed to a religious institution known to me is that in the recently discovered copper-plate of Vainyagupta dated 185 Gupta Era or 502 CE (Furui forthcoming), which—perhaps significantly—stems from Samatāṭa, i.e., a region of Bengal that lies very close to Arakan, as we already saw above. That inscription, after indicating the extent of land donated to a community of Ājīvaka ascetics, adds the following list of movable items (ll. 43–46):

*kāṁsaśrapaṇāḥ 4 kāṁsagalantakāḥ 4 balibhājanattraya 3  
tāmragalantaka 2 dantapīṭhikāḥ 8 dantaparyyaṅkā 6 kalantaka  
3 bṛhatkāṁsanadikā 10 śānaśilā 3 kāṁsataṣṭhakāḥ 40 • kaṭorikāḥ  
40 • vāsi 5 chāttrā 20 • kuddālikāḥ 8 kuṭhārikāḥ 8 uñcca 4  
nikhātānā 8 • karapaṭtra 3 kaṭṭārikā 7*

“Brass cooking vessels 4. Brass water jars 4. Three vessels for offerings 3. Copper water jars 2. Ivory stools 8. Ivory palanquins 6. *Kalantakas* 3. Large brass trumpets 10. Whetstones 3. Brass *taṣṭhakas* 40. Small cups 40. Adzes 5. Parasols 20. Small spades 8. Small axes 8. Gleaning (baskets?) 4. Digging (instruments?) 8. Saws 3. Small daggers 7.”

The problems caused by the poor state of preservation of the stone are in our case compounded with the obscurity of many of the terms used in the list, although a few elements (*kāṁsa/kāṁsa*, *bhājana*, *vāsikā=vāsi*, *kaṭṭārikā*) are shared with the list in Vainyagupta’s grant. For the background of the monastic

71 See the inscription from the Thahte Mokku temple, Shwezigon, Pagan, edited and translated in Pe Maung Tin and Luce 1963.

usage of such household implements, see von Hinüber 2009 (esp. p. 13 on *vāsi* and *sūci*).

The Prine Cha inscription twice (ll. 8 and 15) uses the expression *vandhadravya* (i.e. *bandhadravya*), which appears to be a technical term implying certain conditions of use to which the endowment was subjected. Unfortunately, in both occurrences the immediately preceding word is hard to read, but does not seem to be the same: especially, the segment *guru* in line 8 is merely a possibility among others, this particular one perhaps receiving some support from the existence of the term *gurudravya* in at least one Buddhist Sanskrit source.<sup>72</sup> I have not found any clear indication of what may be implied by the term *bandha* “binding, attachment,” but cognate terms do occasionally figure elsewhere in Buddhist epigraphy. See e.g. Schopen (1997: 260–1), about “the Buddha’s location, his proprietorship and his permanent residency in local monasteries,” illustrated by the example of “a fifth or sixth century inscription from Cave VI at Kuda” on the west coast of India. It says, in Schopen’s citation and translation:

*deyadharmmoyam śākyabhikṣoḥ saṃghadevasya atra ca  
chemdinakṣetra[m] badhvā dīpamūlya-buddhasya dattam {||}  
yo lopaye[t] pa[m]camahāpātakaba[sam]yukto bhave[t]*

“This is the gift of the Śākyabhikṣu Saṃghadeva. And having here attached the Chemdina field it is given to the Buddha as capital for lamps. Whoever would disrupt {this endowment} would incur the five great sins.”

Here, the word *badhvā* (i.e. *baddhvā*) is, like *vandha* in our inscription, derived from the verb *bandh* “to bind, attach.”

72 At the beginning of book 2 of the *Sphuṭārthā Śrīghanācārasaṃgrahaṭīkā* by Jayarakṣita, we read: *anādhānīyasyetyādinā gurubhūtatoḍ gurudravyaṃ sāṃghikam eva | anyad gurudravyaṃ na bhavati sāṃghikasyaiva gurudravya-tvena viraṃśatāt |*. With some adaptation from Derrett’s translation (1983: 36), I propose that this means: “ ‘Not to be given in loan’, etc., means the ‘heavy property’ that is *sāṃghika* (i.e., that belongs to the *saṅgha* collectively) because of its importance. No other item is ‘heavy property’; only [property that is] *sāṃghika* is meant by ‘heavy property’.”

Schopen explains that “[w]hile the full technical sense of *badhvā* is not entirely clear, I have translated it as “having attached,” intending by that some of the legal sense of the English phrase. It is, however, clear from the imprecation that we are dealing with an ongoing endowment.” Following a suggestion of Christian Lammerts, I offer here the hypothesis that the term *bandhadravaya* was intended to specify a donation to the *saṅgha* collectively rather than to any individual monk, and that what is called *bandhadravaya* (or even *gurubandhadravaya*, if my reading at the beginning of l. 8 is correct) corresponds to what is called *garubhaṇḍa* in Pali *vinaya* terminology,<sup>73</sup> and *gurudravaya* in the Sanskrit source referred to above.<sup>74</sup>

From the first studies of Arakan Sanskrit epigraphy onwards, it has been widely accepted that Buddhism in first-millennium Arakan was somehow “Mahāyāna.” Thus, Johnston himself concluded (1944: 371):

It seems then that the Mahāyāna in Arakan was represented either by Mahāyānist Sarvāstivādins or by a Mahāyānist school which derived ultimately from that sect, such as the Vijñānavādins, who took from it much of their dogmatics.

Gutman (1998: 108) believed that she could confirm the documentary evidence used by Johnston on the basis of her art-historical study of Buddhist relief sculptures from Selagiri, to surmise that these reliefs “illustrate the spread, in the sixth or the seventh century, of Mahayanist influence from the schools of Northeast India to Arakan.” This is not the place and I am not qualified to enter into a discussion of the problematic question what Mahāyāna actually is. But the pieces

<sup>73</sup> Meaning property which cannot leave the monastery, is not heritable, and which cannot be given away by individual monks. See Lingat 1937: 442–60.

<sup>74</sup> See n72. Jayaraksita was active around 500 CE (Derret 1983: 7) and based his work on various *vinayas*, which means that the terminology he used is also liable to have been known in Arakan in the second half of the first millennium.

of evidence teased from Ānandacandra's *praśasti* (A. 71) by Johnston in support of his conclusion are weak and few in number. The insistence on Mahāyāna seems partly determined by a view, now outdated, of what Mahāyāna was in opposition to, for instance, the Buddhism of the "Elders" (*sthavira*, *thera*). The value of some evidence adduced by later scholars, such as the use of the "common Mahāyāna formula" and the occurrence of the term *śākyabhikṣu* in the bell inscription A. 203 is contested.<sup>75</sup> The manner in which the inscriptions A. 1 and A. 60 express the motivations for donation is at best a potential indication of an underlying Mahāyāna ideology. The sum of evidence so far brought to bear perhaps does not actually suffice to prove that in the Buddhism of first-millennium Arakan, Mahāyāna ideology and practice were significant let alone predominant, even if only among the elites who have left records of their religious activities in inscriptions. Nevertheless, while none of the Arakan Sanskrit inscriptions is entirely explicit about the role of Mahāyāna, it is clear that a Mahāyāna identity was considered important in nearby Samatāṭa, and for this I may again refer to the epigraphical record of the Vainyagupta who ruled there at the beginning of the sixth century. For in his Gunaighar copperplate grant of 188 Gupta Era, or 506 CE, we read in lines 3–4 about a teacher Śāntideva called *mahāyānikaśākyabhikṣu* and about an Avalokiteśvarāśramavihāra; then in line 5 about a *mahāyānika(?)vaivarttikabhikṣusaṅgha* "community of non-returning Mahāyānist monks."<sup>76</sup>

While we remain in the dark about the possible presence of elements of the *saṅgha* studying canonical texts in Sanskrit,

75 See n23 above and Kyaw Minn Htin 2011: 403. On the term *śākyabhikṣu*, see Schopen 1979. The donation statements added to some of the Arakan *ye dharmāḥ* inscriptions collected in Kyaw Minn Htin's article contain variants of the "common Mahāyāna formula." See, however, Cousins 2003 and again the response in Schopen 2005: 244–6. I thank Christian Lammerts and Peter Skilling for sharing with me their views, which I make my own, on the (limited) pertinence of these elements.

76 This inscription was edited by D.C. Bhattacharyya (1930). On its importance in the present connection, see also Schopen 1997: 261, 2005: 13, 247.



we have some positive evidence suggesting that some monks at least had access to Pali scriptures. While most *ye dharmāḥ* citation inscriptions are in (often garbled) Sanskrit, at least one specimen of a Pali recension of the same stanza has so far been recorded.<sup>77</sup> More significant in this context is an inscription, which presents less frequently cited Pali canonical material,<sup>78</sup> along with another that seems to be in Pali but for which it has so far been impossible to identify any canonical source.<sup>79</sup> No comparable density of Sanskrit donative epigraphy in co-presence with Pali citation inscriptions appears to exist elsewhere in any period in the greater Bay of Bengal context.

### *Political History: Dharmavijaya*

Inscription A. 2 in all likelihood included, in its original state, an absolute date, and is the only Sanskrit inscription of Arakan known so far to express a date in absolute terms. Alas not enough is preserved of the dating formula to establish what date was expressed. We are no luckier with regard to the name of the ruling king, of whose name only the first two syllables (l. 3: *dharmmā*) are preserved. The inscription also reveals to us another member of the Arakan ruling class, namely the elder brother of the king. His name is not explicitly stated in the parts of the inscription that have been preserved, although there is a chance that his name started with *rāmaśūra*<sup>o</sup>, if we assume that the *vihāra* whose endowment

77 A. 56, slab from Phayagyi shrine in Vesālī: nr. 3 in Kyaw Minn Htin 2011. It is noteworthy that, in contradistinction to the item mentioned in the next note, and all other Pali inscriptions from Myanmar known to me, this one and A. 205 mentioned in n79, are not engraved in a form of script belonging to the Southern Brāhmī group, but are engraved in the same form of Late Northern Brāhmī as will be discussed below for such inscriptions as A. 1, A. 38, A. 55, A. 206, etc.

78 A. 207, slab from Wuntitaung: Gutman 1976: 114–7. The text has parallels in *Majjhimanikāya* 1.72–3 and *Anguttaranikāya* 2.8–9.

79 A. 205, fragmentary pillar inscription from Thinkyitaw: see Sircar 1957–58: 103, plate B.



**Figure 9** A silver coin with legend *dharmmavijaya* from a hoard found in 2014 in Gazipur district (about 45 km north of Dhaka city), in Dhaka division, Bangladesh; collection Noman Nasir, Dhaka.

this inscription records was—as is often the case—named after the person making the endowment.<sup>80</sup>

More fruitful for political history is the inscription A. 1, which is the first inscription issued by Dharmavijaya to have come to light, although it is not the first time this name figures in the historical record. Besides the availability of a number of coins with legends mentioning his name (see for example the one shown here as fig. 9),<sup>81</sup> this ruler was known so far only from his appearance in the king list of Ānandacandra's *praśasti* (A. 71). After mention of a king Vajraśakti in stanzas XXXVII–XXXVIII, we read in stanzas XXXIX and XL:

śrīdharmajayasamyukto lokānugrahatatparaḥ |  
 (37) tatpascād abhavad dhīraḥ śrīdharmavijayo nṛpaḥ ||  
 ṣaṭtriṃśad avdāny upabhujya rājyam

80 See Sanderson 2009. Among many examples of Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Buddhist foundations named after their founder mentioned in study, see especially the cases on pp. 85–6. See already Johnston 1944: 371.

81 A coin of Dharmavijaya was depicted in Luce 1985/II: pl. 2 nr. 19. Two specimens are illustrated in Gutman 1976: pl. XL. See also Mahlo 2012: 84 and the references cited below in n88.

dharmeṇa nītyā ca jayena caiva |  
 ratna(38)trayānusmaraṇābhiyogāt  
 sa devalokaṁ tuṣitaṁ prayāt\* ||

“After him, there was a brave king, the fortunate Dharmavijaya, attended by fortune, religion and victory, zealous in doing kindness to the world.

After enjoying kingship for 36 years because of religion, policy and victory, through practicing remembrance of the Three Jewels he passed away to the Tuṣita heaven.”<sup>82</sup>

The relationship between Dharmavijaya and Vajraśakti, if any, is not made explicit; Dharmavijaya’s successor Narendravijaya, on the other hand, is explicitly stated to have been Dharmavijaya’s son (stanza XLI). Dharmavijaya is described here, as in A. 1, as a devout Buddhist who ruled for thirty-six years. In the absence of any inscriptions issued by Dharmavijaya, to situate this ruler in absolute chronology scholars have so far relied exclusively on interpretations of the chronology implicit in the king list of Ānandacandra’s *praśasti*, engraved on the Shittaung pagoda pillar at Mrauk U (formerly called Mrohaung), which was issued in the ninth regnal year of the king. The basic line of argument was proposed by Johnston (1944: 365):

It is, however, fortunately easy to place the important inscription of Ānandacandra. Obviously it is closely related to, but later than, the Aphsad inscription of Ādityasena (*Corpus Inscr. Indicarum*, iii, pp. 200ff.); the substantial difference is in the form of *ja*, which at Aphsad shows the first beginning of the change effected in the second half of the seventh century, whereas on the Mrohaung pillar the change has been carried through. The script of Yaśovarmadeva’s inscription at Nālandā, which belongs undoubtedly to the first half of the eighth century (*vide* Bhandarkar’s List, No. 2105), is almost entirely identical with that of Ānandacandra’s inscrip-

82 Cited after ed. and transl. Johnston 1944: 376, 381.—*avdāny*: *abdāny* Johnston.—*prayāt\**: *prayātaḥ* Johnston. Barnett notes ‘The stone has *prayāt*, with final *t*.’ It is necessary to emend and *prayātaḥ* seems the best choice.

tion, both in the form of the letters and in style of writing. [...] Among noteworthy peculiarities are the peculiar forms given to consonants when they occur at the end of a hemistich, in place of the *virāma* used at Nālandā.

This citation illustrates something of the confidence with which earlier generations of Indologists thought they could arrive at datings based on a very limited number of palaeographic comparisons, and concentration on a very small number of test-letters. Almost all subsequent scholarship has retained unquestioned the basic comparison that is made here with the Nālandā stone inscription of Yaśovarmadeva. Sircar (1957–58: 108) has contributed to eternalizing it by proposing the very precise date of 729 CE for the Nālandā inscription. But it is important to remember that that inscription itself contains no date, and that Sircar's date was no more than an approximation. And even if that approximation may be roughly on the mark, the palaeographic similarity claimed by Johnston is not described in any detail, either by Johnston himself or by Sircar. As long as the similarities are not positively shown, and as long as it is not asked whether any other inscriptions, especially ones whose provenance lies closer to Arakan, might reveal equally or even more striking palaeographic similarities with A. 71, the Johnston-Sircar approach to dating this inscription must be treated as no more than a weakly supported claim.

Nevertheless it is this claim that has become the foundation for dating backwards from Ānandacandra's ninth year all of his predecessors figuring in the king list. This king list has, moreover, been treated as a factual description of political history, with as major corollary that the list has been interpreted as a sequential presentation of rulers.<sup>83</sup> And yet, in a seminal article published in 1975, David P. Henige has made some important cautionary statements about the inher-

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83 See most recently Mahlo 2012: 88–95, illustrating how the king list is commonly interpreted sequentially and how each king is situated in absolute chronology.

ent limitations of such epigraphic king lists for establishing chronological sequences (538, 541):

The first, if apparently not the most obvious, of these deficiencies is that most of the genealogies in the inscriptions were never designed to present a connected, coherent and comprehensive genealogical structure or king list but only to present the immediate (or in some cases more remote) ancestors of the executor of the inscription. This being so, they ineluctably practice collateral suppression. [...] They can be incomplete in several ways—by excluding collaterals, by omitting earlier rulers, and, of course, by not including any members of the line who may have ruled after the inscriber of the record.

Some indications that the case of Ānandacandra's king list may not have been an exception have already come to light, notably in the form of coin issues found in Arakan of rulers not figuring in the list.<sup>84</sup> In fact, the Arakan inscriptions themselves quite explicitly speak of distinct lineages, and suggest that they would—at times, if not habitually—have been in competition. Thus Dharmavijaya is presented in A. 1 as a sprout of the “Bird-lineage,”<sup>85</sup> and as having brought woe upon a “Rudra-lineage.” Since Rudra and Īśa are alter egos

84 Thus, for instance, the case of Nītivijaya, discussed by Mahlo (2012: 99): “Since King Nītivijaya is not mentioned on the inscribed stela [*sic*, the pillar-inscription A. 71 is intended—A.G.], he could have reigned after Ānandacandra. However, the name suffix suggests a possible chronological relationship to Dharmavijaya [...]”.

85 Comparable genealogical expressions are known elsewhere in the Sanskrit cosmopolis. See Barnett's reference (in Johnston 1944: 370n1) to his own paper in *EI* 19 (1926–27), dealing with six inscriptions of the Konkan area in western India, issued by kings claiming descent from a Vidyādhara Jimūtavāhana (“Could-Vehicle”) and mentioning also a *khacaravaiṃśa* “bird-lineage”; see on the former genealogical claim now Schmiedchen 2014: 216. Descent from an ancestor Virabhadra, who was born from a peahen's egg, is claimed in inscriptions of the Ādi-Bhāñjas of Orissa, in Eastern India (see the stanza quoted by Das Gupta 1931: 232; see also Tripathy 1974: II–III and for the stanza in question her inscriptions 1–9).



of Śiva, this *rudrānvaya* is certainly the same as the *īśānvaya* in A. 71, st. XXXII and XLII.<sup>86</sup> It is tempting to speculate that the terms *rudrānyava* and *īśānvaya* designated the lineage of “devout worshipers of Śiva” (*paramamāheśvara*), none of whose names are, alas, preserved, which is presented in the copper-plate inscription A. 206.<sup>87</sup> There is thus some reason to be suspicious of Ānandacandra’s inscription A. 71 as chronological guide. In the current interpretation of the political history of Arakan, following that guide, only nineteen years separated the end of the reign of Dharmavijaya and the beginning of that of Ānandacandra. I will argue below that palaeographic comparison of the types of script observed in the inscriptions suggests *prima facie* a much greater chronological distance between the two.

Before moving on to a discussion of palaeography, however, it is important to emphasize here that A. 1, being the first known epigraphical record of Dharmavijaya, was found in Arakan. This fact seems to give reason to reconsider the conviction expressed in several publications by numisma-

86 Cf. also the *devānvaya* in stanza XXXVII. Deva, too, may be a synonym for Śiva.

87 Cf. on this inscription the observations of Sanderson 2009: 85–6: “a fragmentary copper-plate inscription (EI 37: 13) from a site near Mrohaung recording a donation by queen Kimmājuvdevī of a village to a Buddhist monastery founded by herself begins by relating six generations of the ascendants of her husband the king. Unfortunately the names of this king and his ancestors have been lost through the scissoring off of strips from the top and right hand side of the plate. However, what remains conveys the unexpected information that all these kings were *paramamāheśvaraḥ*. The editor of the inscription assigns it to the sixth century on the grounds of its close palaeographic similarity to the grants of Nīticandra and Viracandra, and argues that if the first of the six kings was, as is likely, Dveṇḍra, the founder of the Candra dynasty, then the king in question was Nīticandra’s father Bhūticandra (r. c. 496–520). Viracandra, he argues, is excluded by the fact that one of the two Vesālī inscriptions records his patronage of Buddhism. However, that a king should give to Buddhism and at the same time be declared a *paramamāheśvaraḥ* in documents issued by the royal chancellery is quite within the bounds of possibility, as we have seen.” On the religious epithets of royal patrons current in Sanskrit epigraphy, among which *paramamāheśvara*, see Schmiedchen 2011.

tists, based exclusively on the fact that some of his coins were excavated at Mainamati and elsewhere in what is now south-eastern Bangladesh, that Dharmavijaya's kingdom was centered in Samatāṭa rather than in Arakan.<sup>88</sup>

## Palaeographic Comparison of the New Inscriptions

As noted above, scholars have almost unanimously accepted the chronological framework for ancient Arakan based on Johnston's previously cited claim that "the script of Yaśovarmadeva's inscription at Nālandā, which belongs undoubtedly to the first half of the eighth century [...], is almost entirely identical with that of Ānandacandra's inscription," a claim which was adopted by Sircar. The only scholar who has so far expressed any other opinion in this matter was J. Cribb, who made several important observations (1986: 119–20):

Firstly, J[ohnston] and S[ircar] saw close relationships between the lettering style of a handful of Arakanese inscriptions of the period of earlier coin-issuing kings, of which one names Nīticandra and another Vīracandra[,] and Indian script styles. J and S saw a connection particularly between the style of these inscriptions and various late Gupta inscriptions (i.e., 5–6<sup>th</sup> century) from Bengal and neighbouring areas. Secondly they pointed to an early 8<sup>th</sup> century inscription from Nālandā as the

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88 See, for instance, Mahlo (2012: 93): "For most of his reign, King Dharmavijaya resided in Mainamati in present-day Bangladesh". Sircar (1973: 5) mentions a coin of Dharmavijaya unearthed at Mainamati, but does not give any reference. Rhodes (2006: 78) shows two specimens found at an unknown site ostensibly near Chittagong, and mentions that several more such coins have been found in southern Tripura and in southeastern Bangladesh. The coin shown here in fig. 9 was even found north of Dhaka. Note that B.N. Mukherjee had already argued against the association of Dharmavijaya with Samatāṭa (2003: 206): "a few coins of Dharmavijaya of Arakan could have reached the Mainamati area. Mitchiner has adduced no real reason for extending the latter's kingdom to Samatāṭa (HCSEA, pp. 75–6; CHBA, p. 61)".

closest parallel to Ānandacandra's inscriptions. [...] Several features of Arakanese script style before the time of Ānandacandra developed independently of other NE Indian script styles. These distinctive features observed in stone, metal and coin inscriptions suggest that Arakanese script remained isolated from developments elsewhere. Changes in this script during the time of Ānandacandra and his immediate predecessors shows [sic] that this isolation persisted, but that at some point it was temporarily breached by a fresh input of imported stylistic features. These new developments were derived from NE India where they had evolved by the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, but stayed in vogue over the next two centuries. Consequently the palaeographic evidence derived from Ānandacandra's inscription only implies a date for it during the 8–10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The closest parallel to the script style is from the neighbouring area of SE Bengal. This inscription bears the name of Kāntideva, a king of Harikela.

Cribb thus adduces a palaeographic comparison geographically much closer to Arakan than the Nālandā inscription relied upon by Johnston and Sircar, but just as those scholars, does not support his claim with any concrete examples at the akṣara level. In the absence of a fine-grained demonstration, any palaeographic judgment is bound to remain impressionistic. That said, I share Cribb's impression that the epigraphy of Harikela provides some of the most relevant comparisons for the Arakan corpus. And yet, despite the fact that two new Harikela inscriptions have become known since the publication of Cribb's study, none of the Harikela inscriptions is securely dated so that the comparison does not lead us anywhere in terms of absolute chronology.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the

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89 An absolute chronology for the three Harikela inscriptions known so far has been proposed by G. Bhattacharya, the editor of the two newly discovered vase inscriptions (1993: 332n18), but—in a manner that is frustratingly characteristic of the scholarship in this field—this is done without any argumentation.

Harikela inscriptions only illustrate the second type of script mentioned by Cribb.

The inscriptions A. 2 and A. 60 now furnish two new Arakanese examples of this second type, which may broadly be classified as “Siddhamāṭṭkā.”<sup>90</sup> A rare anchor for this script type in absolute chronology may be available in the small corpus of inscriptions issued by kings of the Khaḍga family, whose inscriptions contain no absolute dates but who are assumed to have ruled in Samatāṭa in the late seventh century. The basis for this assumption is the hypothesis of synchronism with the Chinese pilgrim Sengzhe (僧哲). This monk’s sojourn in Samatāṭa (Sanmodazha 三摩咄吒) is recounted by Yijing (d. 713 CE) in the *Biography of Eminent Monks Who Went to the Western World in Search of the Law During the Great Tang Dynasty*, and coincided with the reign of a king Heluosheba-zhe or Heluoshebatuo (曷羅社跋吒), the Chinese representation of whose name has been interpreted as Harṣabhaṭa or Rājabhaṭa. If the latter interpretation is correct, it yields a name resembling that of a Rājarāja or Rājarājabhaṭa attested in the Ashrafpur copper-plates of Devakhaḍga.<sup>91</sup>

A. 1, on the other hand, furnishes only the second extensive example available so far of the first script type distinguished by Cribb, which may provisionally be labeled as “Late Northeastern Brāhmī.” A secure *terminus post quem* is available for this type. It may safely be assumed to be later than the Samatāṭa inscriptions of Vainyagupta, which are dated in the Gupta Era and belong to the early years of the sixth century.<sup>92</sup> The problem lies in determining how far the consistently undated Arakan specimens of this second type

90 See Dani 1986: 112–3.

91 See Chavannes (1894: 128 with n3) for the interpretations of the Chinese name and a French translation of the passage from Yijing’s work; Lahiri (1986: 84–5) for an English translation of the same passage; Laskar (1906) for the best available edition of the Ashrafpur copper-plates; Majumdar (1924) and Ganguly (1941–42) on the interpretation of the date of these Khaḍga inscriptions.

92 See D.C. Bhattacharya 1930 and Furui forthcoming.

must be situated in time after the absolute dates of those Vainyagupta charters.

In what follows, I will first present some contrastive observations on the two types of script mainly referring to the three inscriptions A. 1, A. 2, and A. 60 edited in this contribution. The script types of these specimens are shown here in a paleographic table (fig. 10), where I have added for the sake of comparison the inscription of Viracandra (A. 55), which in Sircar's chronology would date to 575–578 CE. The order of the columns in the table reflects a presumptive chronological sequence from oldest on the left to youngest on the right. Whenever no specific occurrence is cited, the intended shape is included in the table.

### *A. 1 and A. 55: "Late Northeastern Brāhmī"*

Other examples of this general type include the bell inscription A. 203, the copper-plate inscription A. 206 and the extremely damaged (and hence unpublished) inscription A. 38 engraved on the back of the Sūrya sculpture held in the Museum at Mrauk U.<sup>93</sup>

In most available specimens of this script-type, no distinction is made between the vocalizations *au* and *o*, the latter serving for both. Only in the copper-plate inscription A. 206 do we see a clear distinction being made between *au* (ll. 7 and 16) and *o*; the same inscription is also the only specimen of this type to maintain a clear distinction between *ṣa*, which has a round bulge at the bottom left, and *sa*, whose bulge is sharp-angled;<sup>94</sup> in other specimens, no corresponding distinction seems to be made between *ṣa* and *sa*, the latter apparently serving for both, although the poor state of preservation of most specimens may have obliterated an

93 For A. 203, see my edition in n23 above based on Luce and Pe Maung Tin 1934–56, *Inscriptions of Burma*, plate CCCLII; for A. 206, see edition and plates in Sircar 1967; for A. 38, see *Inscriptions of Burma*, plate CCCLIII and EFEO estampages n. 2153 and n. 2158.

94 Contrast, for instance, the occurrences of *dharmmābhilāṣāt* in lines 15 and 16 with *reṅgādityadāso* in l. 21.





°r								
-r						tr		
°e	kr							
-e					te	bhe	rge	
°ai	jve	rihe	ve	se				
-ai								
°o						cai		
-o								
°au	to	dvo			gho	to		so
-au								

Figure 10 Continued.





[illegible]

Figure 10 Continued.





originally subtle difference.<sup>95</sup> Occasional distinction of *ba* from *va* is attested.

The shape of *ha* is consistently the archaic one, also observed e.g. in the sixth-century Kotalipada plate, roughly resembling the akṣara *la* and quite precisely shaped like the roman letter J, rather than being close in shape to *bha*.<sup>96</sup> The akṣara *ya* is always “tripartite” with its left extremity turning either inward or outward.<sup>97</sup> The shape of *ṇa* is consistently “open mouthed” (Dani 1986: 282).

The shape of vocalization *ā* is almost without exception that of a hook open toward the right placed on top of the akṣara, not recorded by Dani (1986) but well attested in Bengal epigraphy, for instance, in the Kotalipada plate (consistently) and in the plates of Vainyagupta (in alternation with other shapes). Very rarely, we find the shape that Dani has called “with tick to the right” (1986: 274).

Two shapes occur for the vocalization *i*.<sup>98</sup> Besides the common simple type resembling that used in later periods (a small crescent appended to the top left of the akṣara), a more elaborate type is seen in A. 1, lines 6, 8, and 17. It also occurs a few times in A. 38. The independent vowel sign *°i* is variable in shape, sometimes appearing to consist of a visarga-shaped colon before the hook-shape, sometimes after that same hook-shape, and sometimes seeming to lack any colon-shaped element.<sup>99</sup> For

95 Cf. Pargiter (1910: 194, 203) on the Faridpur plates: “The letters *ṣ* and *s* are made alike, but are generally distinguished in that the loop is round in *ṣ* and triangular in *s*.” The distinction is not represented by Dani (1986: 288–9).

96 This type does not seem to be represented in Dani (1986). On the Kotalipada plate, see Furui 2013: 93–4.

97 Cf. Pargiter 1910: 206–8. Furui (2013: 94) has rightly argued against treating the variation in the shapes of *ya* as an accurate palaeographic criterion.

98 These are precisely the two types illustrated by Dani (1986: 115) for the inscriptions of the North Indian ruler Yaśodharman.

99 Notably in *°iti* at the end of the bell inscription A. 203. See Barnett’s note in Johnston’s article, p. 382 n3: “The letter before *ti* is certainly *i*, though of an unusual type, resembling *u*.” The apparent absence of any colon-shaped element here may, however, be due to wear of the original

vocalization *ī*, we find, besides the simple “curled up form” (Dani 1986: 275) always open to the left, also and more commonly a more complex shape, not represented by Dani (1986), which is formed by a wave first moving upwards, then turning downward and finally slanting again in upward direction.

### *A. 2 and A. 60: “Siddhamāṭṛkā”*

In this script type, which is the one best known for Arakan from Ānandacandra’s *praśasti* A. 71, vocalizations *o* and *au* are clearly distinguished, and so are the akṣaras *ṣa* and *sa*. Conversely, no distinction between *ba* and *va* is attested here, the latter serving for both.

For all of the akṣaras and vocalizations mentioned under the previous type, this second type shows very clearly different and less archaic shapes. Here, the akṣaras *bha* and *ha* are often closely similar, and *ya* is consistently bipartite; *ṇa* is in this script type consistently “three-toothed” (Dani 1986: 282). Vocalizations *ā*, *i*, and *ī* also show their modern shapes familiar to anyone who can read Bengali or Devanāgarī script. The akṣara °*i* has here become the “late initial *i* of the north, in which two dots are above and a tailed one below” (Dani 1986: 274).

A distinctive feature of this script type is the frequent use of shorthand forms instead of transparent akṣara+virāma combinations. While my table shows only cases of *m*\*, other shorthand vowel-less consonants are found in A. 71.<sup>100</sup> Another noteworthy characteristic is the ornate final form of the akṣara *ti*, indicated in the table with an exclamation point; the same is observed in Bengal epigraphy in the Ashrafpur plate “B”, ll. 17 and 23.<sup>101</sup> But this was already used in the script type of A. 1.

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or an imperfection of the reproduction. An example in A. 144, l. 4 (Johnston 1944: 383; *Inscriptions of Burma*, plate CCCLIIe) shows the colon postposed.  
 100 See for example *k*\* in ll. 23, 25 and 33, apparently not differentiated in shape from *t*\* figuring in ll. 18, 20, 26, 38, 45; *n*\* occurs in ll. 22, 25, 36, 41, 52, 53. Cf. Gutman 1976: 37.

101 See Laskar 1906.

### *A Chronological Paradox?*

The upshot of the preceding discussion is that we are confronted with two very clearly distinct script types. The first shows a number of similarities with Bengal inscriptions of the sixth century. Notably, the Dharmavijaya inscription A. 1 is much closer in script-type to the Vīracandra inscription A. 55, than to the specimens of the “Siddhamāṭṛkā” type. The latter are unlikely to be earlier than the Ashrafpur inscriptions of Samataṭa, tentatively datable to the late seventh century. I suppose, on the contrary—although I cannot positively demonstrate it—that the Arakan specimens of the “Siddhamāṭṛkā” type are younger than those from Ashrafpur, and a natural conclusion therefore would be to situate A. 2, A. 55, and A. 71, and hence the reign of Ānandacandra, in the eighth century at the earliest, without being able to exclude a date in the ninth. In palaeographic terms, the specimens of the two respective types would seem to be separated by some 100 to 200 years.

The received chronology, however, situates the beginning of Dharmavijaya’s reign only 55 years before the beginning of that of Ānandacandra, while conventional historiography would situate the end of Vīracandra’s reign 90 years before the beginning of that of Dharmavijaya and hence 145 years before the beginning of Ānandacandra’s.<sup>102</sup> While the distance in time between Vīracandra and Ānandacandra, extrapolated from the king list in Ānandacandra’s *praśasti*, accords well with the palaeographic distance between A. 55 and A. 71, the palaeographic approach to dating Dharmavijaya’s inscription A. 1 yields a result that seems to contradict the king list. How might we resolve this paradox?

### **Conclusions**

If we choose to accept the data from the king list at face value, then Cribb’s observations cited above furnish a way

<sup>102</sup> I refer again to the overview provided in Mahlo 2012: 88.

out of the palaeographic conundrum: the apparently close connection between the writing styles of Vīracandra's and Dharmavijaya's stone carvers may be due to conservatism on the part of the latter, while the apparently wide gap between those of Dharmavijaya's and Ānandacandra's stone carvers may be due to an abrupt modernization under influence from Bengal. On the other hand, if we prioritize palaeographic analysis, then Henige's cautionary remarks also cited above, along with my detection of traces of competition between lineages, provide an argument against relying on the king list: what is presented there as a succession of rulers may telescope into a single line what were in reality collateral lines of competing ruling houses, while obliterating some historical figures altogether. Since there is no objective way to choose between the two available interpretations of the data, I believe that the only reasonable position with regard to the problem of dating of the first-millennium inscriptions of Arakan, in the present state of knowledge, is to remain agnostic. This is one of the principal general conclusions of the present contribution.

The other general conclusion must be that comparison with Bengal is perhaps even more crucial for making progress in the study of early Arakan than was already realized by previous scholars. A variety of connections between cultural practices have been exposed or hinted at throughout this article: shared use of specific script types, shared peculiarities in documentation of endowments to religious institutions, overlapping coinage traditions, etc. Anticipating a more detailed discussion of these issues in my planned monograph on the Sanskrit inscriptions of Arakan, I would like to add to the mentioned indications of close cultural contact that the corollary of admitting strong cultural influence from Bengal on Arakan is that specialists of early Bengal should also shed some of their inhibition when it comes to looking beyond the boundaries that define modern-day "South Asia" and exclude Arakan. Thus, for instance, the coin term *tanḍaka*—found several times in the vase-inscription of Devātideva, king of Harikela—has been flatly stated to be

unique to early southeastern Bengal,<sup>103</sup> whereas an attestation from Arakan was already published by Johnston in 1944, occurring as it does in the inscription A. 71, in stanza LII. A shared tradition of relevant terminology confirms the close connection between coinage traditions of Harikela and Arakan.<sup>104</sup>

Besides these findings, this study of three more Sanskrit inscriptions of Arakan has yielded a likely candidate for the ancient name of Arakan, viz. Kāmarāṅga. It has cast new light on the assumptions of previous scholarship with regard to the dominance of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Arakan in the first millennium. And it has allowed us to resurrect from near or total oblivion the figure of king Dharmavijaya, as well as those of another king and his elder brother whose full names, we may hope, will be revealed by future discoveries.

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103 See G. Bhattacharya (1996: 246 n24): “The term *Taṇḍaka* designating a coin is not to be found in any other record”.

104 See Ghosh 2012–13: 102.

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