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Northern Thai Stone Inscriptions
(14th – 17th Centuries)
Glossary

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Contents

Preface	vii
Introduction	ix
Language and Script	x
The Text Corpus	x
Arrangement of Entries	xii
List of Inscriptions included in the Glossary	xiv
Signs and Abbreviations	xv
Abbreviations of Thai Provinces	xvi
Abbreviations of Books, Journals, and Serial Publications	xvii
Other Abbreviations	xviii
Alphabetical Order of Entries	xix
Glossary	1
Standard Thai - Inscriptional Thai Variants	267
Bibliography	303

Preface

This Glossary is the first part of a two-volume study of northern Thai stone inscriptions. The second volume consists of a comprehensive catalogue.

The result of long and extensive field and museum research, the *Glossary* covers the vocabulary of 173 Thai stone inscriptions, from the beginnings in 1339 AD to 1616/1617 AD. It includes every occurrence of a word in the corpus and, most importantly, every attested spelling variant.

It is intended to assist the researcher in the editing and translation of epigraphic texts as well as the linguist interested in the analysis of medieval regional Thai varieties.

This two volume publication grew out of my doctoral dissertation submitted to Humboldt University, Berlin, and could not have been realized without the assistance and excellent expertise of my supervisor Professor Christian Bauer. His own research inspired and encouraged me to undertake such a major project. Data collection, research and analysis were often fraught with difficulty, and his help and support were invaluable.

Individuals and institutions in Thailand and their co-operation helped me realise my thesis project in every way. Necessary background information was given without fail in most cases. Personal communication with Dr. Hans Penth (Archive of Lanna Inscriptions at the Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University) was always helpful, and I would like to thank Dr. Penth for dedicating time and sharing his knowledge. The National Library in Bangkok and their staff were, over the years, always very helpful. Without their support many more lacunæ would appear in my Glossary and Catalogue, and the corpus would probably be incomplete.

I also thank the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) and the staff of the National Museums of Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Saen, Lamphun and Nan for their co-operation and for granting me permission for inspecting and photographing inscriptions held in these museums.

Finally, I would like to thank my son Marvin and my parents Hartmut and Marlies for their support and patience during my research. Without their sacrifice and understanding such a book would not have been possible.

Marek Buchmann

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Introduction

The inscriptions covered in this *Glossary*, constituting the corpus of Northern Thai Stone Inscriptions (henceforth NTSI), date from one particular historical period of northern Thailand: the era of the “Lanna kingdom” (from Lanna or Lan Na ล้านนา *lān² nā /lá:n na/* [‘million’, ‘rice field’] “a million rice fields”).¹

The first stone inscriptions from sites in northern Thailand date from the 12/13th century AD. Two are dated to 1218 and 1219 AD (LB04 Wat Kukut I, LB05 Wat Don Kaew, respectively).² These stone inscriptions are written in Mon, with some passages in Pali. They were all discovered in the city area of Lamphun and at the southern, neighbouring area of Chiangmai province.³ Mon inscriptions are confined to these two provinces only, and no further epigraphs in Mon in this area are attested after the 13th century.

The next important dated stone inscription from Lamphun is LB38 (Wat Phra Yuen), dated 1370 AD and written in Thai.

The last northern Thai stone inscription considered here is JR07, dated 1616/1617 AD. That year represents a hiatus as it took nearly another two centuries for stone inscriptions to emerge again in northern Thailand, at a time when that region was recaptured by the Thais from the Burmese.

Northern Thailand has yielded a large number of inscriptions. About 60 percent of vernacular inscriptions from Thailand belong to the northern region.

Mon inscriptions, as the first group, mark also the beginning of inscriptional activity. All subsequent inscriptions are conventionally classified as one large group, referred to as “Northern Thai inscriptions” (or ‘Lanna’, or occasionally ‘Yuan’, inscriptions). As mentioned above, one of the earliest inscriptions, LB38 (at Wat Phra Yuen ‘Monastery of the Standing Buddhas’, Lamphun, Muang district), is dated 1370 AD. But this large group of northern Thai inscriptions includes more than 1,200 inscriptions. A more appropriate classification is called for to differentiate this large number of epigraphs.

One way of differentiating the corpus is along chronological lines: inscriptional activity is receding during the Burmese occupation (1558–1776 AD). A classification into a pre-Burmese and post-Burmese period appears to be appropriate for stone inscriptions. This correlates well with the use of scripts: pre-Burmese inscriptions are nearly all written in *Fak Kham* script and post-Burmese mostly in *Dhamma-Lanna* script. But *Fak Kham* script does, on occasion, appear also in the post-Burmese period.

1 Pronunciation given is in the modern Central Thai dialect.

2 Robert Halliday, *Les inscriptions môn du Siam*, BEFEO 30, 1930, p. 81-105.

3 Christian Bauer, *Notes on Mon epigraphy*, JSS, 79.1, p. 31-83, 79.2, p.61-79, 1991.

While only very few inscriptions have been translated into English or other European languages, nearly all of them have been published in modern Thai editions.

In these editions the original text appears transliterated in modern Thai script, in its original orthography, accompanied, in a text column *en face*, by a translation into modern Central Thai.

Northern Thai dialect vocabulary, judged to be unknown to the modern Thai reader, is sometimes glossed in a footnote. But it is open to question whether the readings and minimal glosses provided are sufficient for analysis and interpretation of these inscriptions.

This *Glossary* is intended to be a first step towards establishing proper readings and translations. Glossary entries provided include all occurrences of a particular vocabulary item.

Language and Script

There are two main vernacular languages that appear in inscriptions in northern Thailand: Mon and Thai.

Inscriptions in either language include occasionally Pali passages. Sanskrit is confined to loanwords only.

The oldest inscriptions found in northern Thailand, as has been said, are all written in Mon. With the political emergence of the Thais epigraphic Mon disappeared. Inscriptions in northern Thailand after 1370 AD are written in Thai.

Inscriptions included in the NTSI corpus are written in Thai, specifically the northern Thai dialect, also called Thai-Yuan, or Khammuang, Thai Lanna or Lan Na. It is one of several regional dialects of Thai, the others being Southern Thai, Northeastern Thai, and Central Thai (Bangkok Thai).

Inscriptions in Thai-Yuan are written in one of two scripts: either in (1) Dhamma-Lanna (อักษรธรรม *'ākṣar dharm* /ʔaksǝ:n tham/) or in (2) Fak Kham (ฝักขาม *fāk khām* /fāk kʰǎ:m/ or 'Tamarind' script). More information about the scripts, orthography and phonology is to be found in Volume II.

The Text Corpus

Compiling the corpus, which forms the basis of this *Glossary*, proved to be an unexpectedly complex task. Nearly all inscriptions included here have already been published before. But secondary sources, indices, or even names of inscriptions very often differed and contradicted one another. The corpus includes

all inscriptions that were ‘accessible’, meaning: all inscriptions that could be identified, traced, located, photographed, read, and checked against published editions, if extant.

The reader can now be sure that this corpus is complete and reliable. All available data are listed in the *Catalogue* (Volume II), with every single inscription featuring references to its bibliography, image citation, its find spot and current location, and variant readings.

The corpus consists of 173 stone inscriptions from northern Thailand, dating from the ‘pre-Burmese’ period. The last inscription included dates to 1616/1617 AD (JR07), the earliest to 1339 AD (BR01), a period covering 278 years.

All inscriptions included are written in Thai. Mon inscriptions from northern Thailand are, of course, excluded here; they form a separate corpus.

There are three main criteria for limiting the corpus:

- (1) The first criterion is the *geographic extent*. The inscriptions originate from Thailand. No inscriptions from northern Laos or northern Burma (Myanmar) are included. The documentation of epigraphs from those regions is still too insufficient and unreliable. Only inscriptions from the eight northern Thai provinces Phrae, Phayao, Chiang Mai, Chaing Rai, Nan, Lamphun, Lampang and Mae Hong Son are included. There are, of course, other northern provinces but inscriptions from these do not match the other criteria that are set for the corpus.
- (2) *Chronological range* is the second criterion. As already mentioned, early inscriptions in northern Thailand were written in Mon. Inscriptions dating from the end of the 14th century AD were written mostly in Thai. The script used from that time onward changed as well, being mainly Fak Kham. So the chronological starting point was the use of Fak Kham script. The Burmese controlled the north of Thailand from 1558 AD onwards. There was a significant decline in inscriptional activity in that period, as can be seen from the relevant entries in the *Catalogue* of Volume II: while there are 118 dated inscriptions from the 16th century AD, only eight inscriptions date from the beginning of the 17th century. There is thus a clear break in inscriptional activity as evidenced by dated inscriptions. Later inscriptions from the 18th century onwards were still written in Fak Kham but most of them used the Dhamma-Lanna script. Dividing groups of stone inscriptions into a ‘pre-Burmese’ and a ‘post-Burmese’ period is thus a sensible way of managing the corpus. This ‘hiatus’ is thus a defining criterion. The post-Burmese inscriptions have been excluded here. The last dated inscription included in the corpus is JR07, dated to 1616/1617 AD. The next dated stone inscription NN16, from Nan, is dated 1789 AD, written in Dhamma script and not included.