Tracing Back Manuscript Lineages Through Variant Readings:
Focused on Khom Script Manuscripts of the Dīghanikāya

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To prepare a new edition of the *Dīghanikāya* (DN), forty-five representative manuscripts have been selected as primary material from four traditions, namely Sinhalese (C), Burmese (B), Khom (K), and Tham (T) script traditions. In the course of editing this text, when an adequate number of variant readings has been gathered, they can suggest a new understanding of the manuscript transmission of the Pāli canon. In general, it seems that the canonical texts have come down to us through two major lineages—Sinhalese and Southeast Asian which includes Burmese, Khom, and Tham script manuscripts.

This paper will focus on Khom manuscripts of which variants suggest that there were at least two sub-lineages of Khom manuscripts—pre-Rattanakosin and Rattanakosin period (since 1782). The former is preserved only in rare manuscripts; the latter has been transmitted into the Syāmaratṭha edition (S²), a standard edition of the Pāli canon in Thailand.

1. Problem with the Transmission of the Pāli Canon in Thailand

In 1767, when the Ayutthaya kingdom was completely destroyed in the Burmese-Siamese war, a large number of Khom manuscripts, including those containing the Pāli canon, were destroyed or lost. According to Oskar von Hinüber (1983, 75–76), the Pāli canon of the old Khom tradition could only be restored through the Sinhalese and Burmese traditions. This implies the problem of contamination, with the Khom manuscript tradition being influenced by those two outside traditions.

However, according to Prince Damrong (1916, 4–5), only two years after the fall of Ayutthaya, another set of Khom manuscripts containing the Pāli canon was found in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, a large city in southern Thailand, by King Taksin. He had these manuscripts brought to the new capital, Thonburi, and asked senior monks to seek other copies of lost texts from Cambodia and elsewhere. The restoration of the Siamese Pāli canon then
took place in 1788–1789 under the reign of King Rama I of the Rattanakosin period. And, finally, it became the Pāli canon of Sē in the present day. Thus, the Pāli canon of the Khom tradition did in fact survive without considerable contamination from Sinhalese and Burmese traditions. Prince Damrong’s thesis is confirmed by several readings in our Khom manuscripts which differ significantly from both the Sinhalese and Burmese traditions.

2. Two Sub-lineages of Khom Manuscripts of the Pāli Canon

Among our Khom manuscripts, there are three pre-Rattanakosin manuscripts: K1 (1777) for DN I, and K7 (before 1767) and K8 (1781) for DN II. By focusing on K1 and K7, the next four examples will demonstrate how the sub-lineages of Khom manuscripts come to light through their variant readings. The first example will show the peculiarity of the Khom tradition, and the rest will show two sub-lineages within the Khom manuscripts.

Example 1. In the Tevijjasutta (DN 13), the Buddha raises a simile about one man trying to cross over a river with his hands tied by chain/rope.

\[
\text{atha puriso āgaccheyya pāratthiko pāragavesī pārāgamī pāran taritukāmo. so orimatire dalhāya anduyā pacchabāhaṃ gālhahabandhanāmuddho. (DN (E) I 245; (B) I 230, para. 545)}
\]

Then along comes a person who wants to cross over to the far shore. But while still on the near shore, their arms are tied tightly behind their back with a strong \text{chain} … (Bhikkhu Sujato 2018).

- \text{anduyā (B3 C B6 C E); adduyā (B2 T4); andayā (T3); addayā (T3); adayā (T3)}
- \text{rajjuyā (K S6)}

This is a good example showing the peculiarity of Khom tradition. Against other traditions with the reading \text{anduyā} “by a chain,” all K manuscripts, including S6, read \text{rajjuyā “by a rope.”} Either reading “a chain” or “a rope” suits the context well. However, it seems that the majority reading \text{anduyā} should be adopted here. It is worth noting that the change of reading \text{anduyā > raijuyā} is of a direction from a less common to a more common word, which agrees with the theory that the more difficult reading is the stronger.

Example 2. At the end of the Subhasutta (DN 10), having listened to the preaching of Ānanda, the brahmin Subha goes for refuge to the Triple Gem.

\[
\text{esāhaṃ, bho Ānanda, bhavantam Gotamam saranam gacchāmi dhammaṃ ca bhikkhusamghaṃ ca. (DN (E) I 210; (B) I 204, para. 480)}
\]

Venerable Ānanda, I go for refuge to venerable Gotama, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha.

- \text{bhagavantam Gotamam (B4 C12.4.5 K15 C E)}
- \text{bhavantam Gotamam (B2.3.5 C3 T B6 S)}
The brahmin Subha is asking to take refuge in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. Thus, rather than Ānanda, the person to whom the brahmin Subha asked for refuge would have been the Buddha. When referring to the Buddha, either a single word bhagavantaṃ or a set of two words bhavantaṃ Gotamaṃ shall be used. In other words, the reading bhagavantaṃ Gotamaṃ would be redundant.\(^2\) This logic is well supported by a Sanskrit parallel in which only the word bhagavantaṃ can be found: eṣa 'ḥam bhagavantaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi dharmaṃ ca bhikṣusamghaṃ ca … (Allon 2001, 215). Therefore, the reading “bhavantam Gotamaṃ” is preferable here.

Two sub-lineages of K manuscripts can be recognized. The pre-Rattanakosin K\(^1\), and the unknown date K\(^5\) preserve the reading bhagavantaṃ Gotamaṃ, while other K manuscripts, read “bhavantam Ānandaṃ,” a reading with a confusion of transmission.\(^3\)

**Example 3.** A simile of an effect of the first jhāna in the Subhasutta (DN 10). A monk’s body suffused with rapture and happiness is like a ball of bath-powder with moisture.

\[
\text{sā ‘ssa nahāniyapinī snehānugata snehaparetā santarabāhīrā phutā sinehena, na ca paggharani.}
\]

(DN [(E\(^e\)) I 74]; (B\(^e\)) I 201, para. 467)

That ball of bath powder would be soaked and saturated with moisture, suffused through inside and out with moisture, and would not drip out.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{‘paggharani (B\(^e\) C\(^e\) [E\(^e\)]); paggharani (C\(^2\) K\(^5\)); paggharanī (C\(^1\)); pagghadīnaṇi (K\(^1\))} \\
\text{‘paggharini (B\(^1,3\)); paggharini (B\(^3\)); paggharīni (B\(^7\))} \\
\text{‘paggharati (C\(^3,5\) K\(^2,3,4\) T\(^1,2,3,4\) S\(^e\)); pagghariti (T\(^5\)) ‘omit (B\(^2\) C\(^5\))}
\end{align*}
\]

When disregarding an issue of a short or long vowel i/i, the variant readings can be divided into two groups: (1) paggharani or paggharini “dripping out” which is an adjective derived from pa+ ghar “drip out.” (2) paggharati “to drip out” which is a present tense verb from the same root. The former obtains more support in most of manuscripts, whereas the latter is supported mainly by two Thai traditions (K and T). The same possibilities can be seen in the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (Sv), the commentary on the DN, where the lemma of B\(^e\), E\(^e\), and C\(^e\) reads na ca paggharanī (Sv (E\(^e\)) I 218; (B\(^e\)) I 195; [(C\(^e\)) I 152]), while the lemma of S\(^e\) is na ca paggharati (Sv (Se) I 322). Considering the sentence structure “sā assa nahāniyapinī …, na ca paggharanī/paggharati,” either reading seems to suit the sentence well. Therefore, in this case, it is more reasonable to go with the majority reading paggharani.
Here, the pre-Rattanakosin K¹ preserves the reading “pagghadīnaṇi” which might be either a mixture of Sinhalese and Burmese reading or a simple scribal mistake. In any case, it seems to belong to the same group of our preferable reading.

Example 4. In the Ambaṭṭhasutta (DN 3), Ambaṭṭha asks the Buddha to repeat the question that the Buddha has already asked him three times.

kim etam bhavaṃ Gotamo āha? puna bhavaṃ Gotamo brūmetū ti. (DN (E') I 95; (B²) I 89 para. 272)
What was that the venerable Gotama said? May the venerable Gotama say again.

†bravītū (B¹₂₃₄ K¹ B²); bravītu (T¹₂₃₄); bravībhū (B⁴); bravītū (C⁵);abravītu (T⁵)
†brūmetū (C¹³⁴); brūmetū (C²⁵ E⁵); †brūtū (K²³⁴ S⁵); brūbhū (K⁵)

This is one of the most interesting cases to determine the original reading. In general, there are three variant readings of the same verbal root √brū: bravītū, brūmetū, and brūtū. The first reading is found in B and T manuscripts, the second in C, and the third in mainly K manuscripts. Geiger (2005, § 141.2) has pointed out the reading brūmetu as a doubtful form. To solve the problem, Somaratne (2015, 230) proposes an idea that the original reading should be brūtu me “say to me,” based on the Sinhalese reading brūmetū which is a result of an early metathesis: brūtu me > brūmetū. On the other hand, Yamanaka (forthcoming) suggests an emendation “brūvītū” based on the quotation in the Saddanīti 422:11. This problem is still open for further discussion.

Again, the pre-Rattanakosin K¹ preserves the reading “bravitū” which agrees with B and T manuscripts, while the rest of K manuscripts have an easier reading, brūtū.

3. Conclusion

The study of variant readings in Khom manuscripts shows that, even after the fall of Ayutthaya, the Pāli canon in Thailand has been transmitted without significant contamination from Sinhalese and Burmese traditions. There were at least two sub-lineages of Khom manuscripts, attested in manuscript from the pre-Rattanakosin (K¹ and K⁷) and Rattanakosin periods. The former tends to have a closer relationship with B and C manuscripts than the latter, on which the current Thai edition of Tipiṭaka (S⁵) seems to be based. The fact that the manuscripts of the Rattanakosin period have preserved unique and distinct readings from other traditions may lead to a further study of the pre-Rattanakosin manuscripts and the restoration of the Pāli canon at the beginning of the Rattanakosin period.
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Notes

1) Burmese manuscripts for DN I — B₁ (1679), B² (1768), B³ (1774), B⁴ (1792), B⁵ (1806); for DN II — B⁶ (1773), B⁷ (1832), B⁸ (1836), B⁹ (1839), B¹⁰ (1882); for DN III — B¹¹ (1784), B¹² (1795), B¹³ (1832), B¹⁴ (1842), B¹⁵ (1883). Sinhalese manuscripts for DN I–III — C¹ (1744), C² (1783), C³ (1832), C⁴ (1855), C⁵ (unknown). Khom manuscripts for DN I — K¹ (1777), K² (1783–1809), K³ (1824–1851), K⁴ (1851–1868), K⁵ (unknown), K⁶ (to be removed); for DN II — K⁷ (before 1767), K⁸ (1781), K⁹ and K¹⁰ (1824–1851), and K¹¹ (unknown); for DN III — K¹² (1807), K¹³ (1824–1851), K¹⁴ (1851–1868), K¹⁵ and K¹⁶ (unknown). Tham manuscripts for DN I — T¹ (1598), T² (1822), T³ and T⁴ (1836), T⁵ (unknown); for DN II — T⁶ (1836); for DN III — T⁷ (1820), T⁸ (1825), T⁹ and T¹⁰ (1836).

2) For more discussion, see Wynne (2013, 160–161). In addition, the Sinhalese tradition tends to overuse the word bhagavant even with other person than the Buddha, see Bunchird (2018, 1035).

3) This confusion might be caused by two factors: (1) the main preacher in the Subhasutta was Ānanda, not the Buddha, as it was a story taking place after the death of the Buddha; (2) the confusion with the vocative Ānanda, as the common point of all manuscripts reading “bhavantaṃ Ānandam” is the omission of the vocative Ānanda before bha(ga)vantaṃ.

Abbreviations

B = Burmese script manuscript; C = Sinhalese script manuscript; K = Khom script manuscript; T=Tham script manuscript; E = European edition (PTS); Other abbreviations follow those in the Critical Pali Dictionary.

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