

CKS EPIGRAPHY WORKSHOP 2021

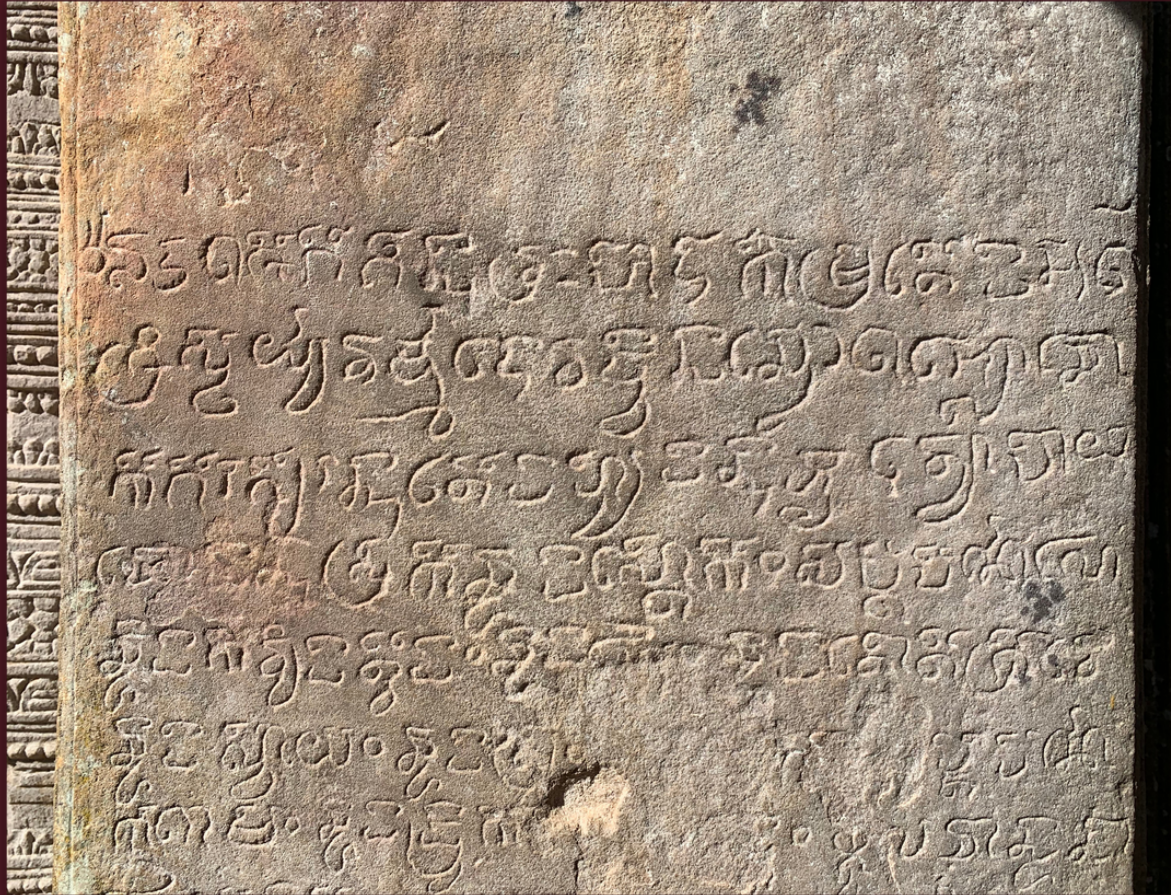


NOVEMBER 02, 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	Introduction
02	About the Workshop
03	Workshop Agenda
04	Workshop Participants
05	Presentation Abstracts

INTRODUCTION



Epigraphy is the study of inscriptions, or texts written on durable materials. In the ancient past of Mainland Southeast Asia, inscriptions were commonly written on stone. During the early historic period, palm-leaf manuscripts were also utilized as a writing material, but any such manuscripts would have long since decomposed, leaving texts written on durable materials as the only records surviving until the present. As such, these inscriptions are valuable sources of knowledge about past cultures of the region, providing research material for scholars in the fields of history, archaeology, philology, and linguistics.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

This workshop is intended as a platform to bring together a group of epigraphy scholars to network, share their research, and expand their knowledge about the work of others in the region. Originally, this workshop was planned as a two-day event in Siem Reap, in collaboration with the **Center for Khmer Studies (CKS)**, the **École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)**, and the **Authority for the Protection of the Site and Management of the Region of Angkor (APSARA)**. Planning for the event began in early 2020, but the outbreak of COVID-19 and subsequent travel restrictions led to postponement of the workshop. Due to continued restrictions, we decided to host this workshop virtually.

Our objective is for this virtual workshop to serve as a preliminary event, bringing together a small group of scholars to begin discussions and encourage communication between them during these times of social isolation. This workshop thus serves as preparation for a larger event when we can invite scholars to come together in Siem Reap. We hope to host this event in 2022, once travel restrictions have eased, and if restrictions do not ease then we will plan for a larger virtual event. As such, the organizing committee hopes to assess the interest and engagement of participants and request feedback regarding how a future event could be most beneficial to scholars and students in Cambodia and regional neighbors.

We would like to express our gratitude to the participants for showing their interest and for their willingness to cooperate virtually. We would also like to thank **Dr. Peter Skilling** for accepting to give a keynote address. Finally, we would like to thank the CKS staff who were involved in the planning and preparation of this event, without whom none of this would have been possible. We hope that everyone involved benefits from this workshop and we look forward to future collaborations.



WORKSHOP AGENDA

Online entry into the event	7:50 - 8:00 AM
Commencement by Ngo Natharoun , CKS Director	8:00 - 8:05 AM
Opening remarks by Hunter Watson , workshop moderator	8:05 - 8:10 AM
Keynote address by Peter Skilling - <i>Southeast Asian Epigraphy Writ Large</i>	8:10 - 8:40 AM
Discussion	8:40 - 9:00 AM
Michel Lorrillard - <i>Epigraphy and Historiography: The Case of the Vat Vixun Inscription in Luang Prabang (16th century)</i>	9:00 - 9:15 AM
Discussion	9:15 - 9:25 AM
U-tain Wongsathit - <i>The Kok Pric Inscription: A Preliminary Study</i>	9:25 - 9:40 AM
Discussion	9:40 - 9:50 AM
BREAK 10 MINUTES	
Gregory Kourilsky - <i>What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Inscriptions? Reflections from the Epigraphy of Southeast Asia</i>	10:00 - 10:15 AM
Discussion	10:15 - 10:25 AM
Sombat Mangmeesuksiri & Kangvol Khatshima - <i>Is Dvārvatī present? Evidence from the Recently Discovered Wat Phra Ngam Inscription</i>	10:25 - 10:40 AM
Discussion	10:40 - 10:50 AM
Hunter Watson - <i>The complexity of typology and labels for ancient scripts in Mainland Southeast Asia</i>	10:50 - 11:05 AM
Discussion	11:05 - 11:15 AM
Dominique Soutif - <i>The CIK and DHARMA Research Programs: Inventory, Study and Dissemination of Epigraphic Data</i>	11:15 - 11:30 AM
Discussion	11:30 - 12:40 PM
Discussion and Closing Remark	11:40 - noon

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



Dr. Peter Skilling

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Peter Skilling is Professor (retired) at the École française d'Extrême-Orient. He specializes in the history and literature of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, and has authored numerous publications. Peter has served as visiting professor at multiple institutions, including Harvard, Oxford, Berkeley, Sydney, and the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University.



Dr. Michel Lorrillard

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Michel Lorrillard is “maître de conférences” (Assistant Professor) at the École française d'Extrême-Orient, and for several years has served as Director of the EFEO Centre in Vientiane, Laos. He is a specialist in the ancient history of the Middle Mekong Valley (Khmer and Mon periods, Lao kingdoms, etc.). His work focuses mainly on the historiographical traditions and inscriptions of the Tai-Lao world, but also on various archaeological remains of Laos. Michel co-edited *New Research in Laos* (EFEO, 2008, 678 pages), and among his recent publications is his article entitled “Research on the Inscriptions in Laos: Current Situation and Perspectives,” D. Perret (ed.) *Writing for Eternity: A Survey of Epigraphy in Southeast Asia* (EFEO, 2018).



Dr. U-tain Wongsathit

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U-tain Wongsathit is Lecturer in the Department of Oriental Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University. He holds a BA in Philosophy from Mahachularaj Vidyalaya, Buddhist University, and an MA in Oriental Languages from Silpakorn University. He spent several years in India, where he studied Sanskrit and completed his PhD. His field of study is Paleography and Epigraphy in India and Southeast Asia, focusing in particular on inscriptions in India, Thailand, and Cambodia. U-tain is a specialist in the fields of Buddhism, philosophy, Indian culture, Sanskrit, Pali, Khmer, and Thai.



Dr. Gregory Kourilsky

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Gregory Kourilsky is Associate Professor at the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO, France). He previously taught History of Thailand and Laos (2008-2009) and Lao Language and Literature (2010-2013) at the National Institute of Foreign Languages and Civilizations (Inalco) in Paris. Between 2013 and 2015, he was a Research Fellow at the University of Bristol (UK). He received his PhD in Religious Anthropology and History of Religions at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), Paris. Gregory specializes in Thai-Lao Buddhism, but also works on Cambodia, Burma, and Southwest China. His research focuses particularly on how Buddhist populations in Mainland Southeast Asia have maintained religious and cultural identity despite intrusion of non-indigenous doctrines, ranging from Indian classical scriptures to modern Western law. His recent publications concern Pali literature and scholarship in 16th century Lanna (Northern Thailand), Buddhist legal texts of 16th century Laos, and filial piety in Theravada Buddhism.



Dr. Sombat Mangmeesukhsiri

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Sombat Mangmeesukhsiri is Assistant Professor in the Department of Oriental Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University. Born in Nakhon Ratchasima Province, he was ordained as a Buddhist monk for 14 years, having graduated in the highest Pali Studies Level 9 from the Assembly of Thai Sangha. He continued his education at Silpakorn University, where he received an MA in Sanskrit Studies, before going to India for his PhD in Sanskrit at the University of Delhi. Sombat is a specialist in Buddhist-Sanskrit, Pali, Indian Philosophy, Sanskrit inscriptions in Mainland Southeast Asia, as well as the Isan-Thai dialect of northeastern Thailand.



Dr. Kangvol Khatshima

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Kangvol Khatshima is Assistant Professor in the Department of Oriental Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University. Born in Buriram Province, he was raised using Northern Khmer as his first language and Thai as his second language. Having spent many years as a Buddhist monk, he achieved Level-9 proficiency of the Pali language. Kangvol attended Silpakorn University for his MA and PhD, and specializes in Sanskrit, Pali, Khmer, and inscriptions in Thailand and Cambodia.



Mr. Hunter Watson

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Hunter Watson is a PhD candidate in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. He holds an BA in Philosophy and Religious Studies from the United States of America, and an MA in Oriental Epigraphy from the Department of Oriental Languages, Faculty of Archaeology, Silpakorn University, where he studied Sanskrit, Khmer, Mon, and the palaeography of early inscriptions in South and Southeast Asia. Hunter's doctoral dissertation project is a study of inscriptions in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, with a focus on cultural activities on the Khorat Plateau. Hunter is a Research Fellow at the Center for Khmer Studies, and received a scholarship from the École française d'Extrême-Orient in support of fieldwork activities.



Dr. Dominique Soutif

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Dominique Soutif holds a PhD in Indian Studies from the University of Paris III on the Religious and Profane Organization of the Khmer temple from the 7th to the 13th century. Since 2010, he has been a Lecturer at the École française d'Extrême-Orient in Khmer archaeology and epigraphy. He has set up, in collaboration with Julia Estève (EPHE), a study, both archaeological and epigraphic, on the āśrama of Yaśovarman I. He is also in charge of the Corpus des inscriptions khmères program (EFEO/EPHE) which, following the work of George Coedès and Claude Jacques, aims to complete the inventory of the epigraphy of ancient Cambodia. Within this framework, he is participating in the field documentation of these inscriptions, while preparing the publication of several unpublished texts in ancient Khmer.



Mr. Hun Chhunteng

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HUN Chhunteng is Lecturer of Old Khmer and Linguistics in the Department of Linguistics, Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). He graduated from RUPP with a BA in Khmer Literature in 2011 and an MA in Linguistics in 2015. Khmer inscriptions have been the focus of his research since early in his undergraduate career. Chhunteng has discovered and produced ink rubbings of numerous newly discovered Khmer inscriptions around Cambodia since 2010. In 2018, he began publishing on newly found inscriptions in various Cambodian journals, as well as revising the reading and interpretation of previously edited inscriptions. Since 2019, he has been a member of the DHARMA Project, where he is responsible for making ink rubbings of unpublished inscriptions and gathering epigraphic metadata throughout Cambodia.

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Southeast Asian Epigraphy Writ Large

Dr. Peter Skilling

The epigraphy of Southeast Asia is a rich and diverse field. Different language families and writing systems interweave to create a broad and fascinating tableau of history, economics, society, and religion over – the length of time is debatable – 1500 years. The vernacular languages join with classical Indian languages (Sanskrit, Pali, a smattering of Prakrit) to give us an idea of the patchwork of religion. What sort of image does it give us? How accurate, how complete, is this picture? The subject of epigraphy raises many questions about the nature and scope of inscriptions as source materials.

Epigraphy and Historiography: The Case of the Vat Vixun Inscription in Luang Prabang (16th century)

Dr. Michel Lorrillard

The recent comparative analysis of the various chronicles of Luang Prabang and of two inscriptions from this same city - the steles of Vat Sangkhalok (1527) and Ban Don Sing (1555) - has shown that epigraphic sources have not only played a determining role in the process of elaboration of the Lao historiographic tradition, from its birth until recent times, but that they also make it possible, thanks to the study of vocabulary, to facilitate the classification of palm-leaf manuscripts of a historical nature, the oldest of which (in terms of their composition) are thus particularly highlighted.

Another 16th century inscription, found at Vat Vixun in Luang Prabang and preserved in Hanoi since the beginning of the 20th century, also contributes to a better understanding of the complex relationships between the first Lao written sources, whatever their medium and function. If the specific purpose of this epigraphic document is to report on the privileges enjoyed by the famous Phra Bang statue, it can be seen that certain versions of the chronicles, among the oldest, provide information on the subject which is much more complete and better contextualized. It may well be that the Vat Vixun Inscription is in fact only a pale reflection of the thriving and vibrant literary culture that prevailed during this period. At the same time, because of the very function of epigraphic documents whose content was inviolable, the historical credibility of the information given by the Lao historiographic tradition, which is often questionable, is amply confirmed here.

The Kok Pric Inscription: A Preliminary Study

Dr. U-tain Wongsathit

The Kok Pric Inscription was discovered in 2011 at Kok Pric Village, Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia. The inscription is written in Sanskrit with typical Angkorian-Khmer script datable to around the 10th century CE. The inscription begins with an invocation to Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahma in the first three stanzas. Following this, there is a two-stanza invocation to the goddesses Umā and Bhārati. The sixth stanza describes the superior qualities of King Yaśovarman. The next stanza mentions King Harṣavarman I, son of the previous king. The eighth stanza describes the following ruler, Iśānavarman II, the younger brother of Harṣavarman. The two final verses of the front face of the inscription describe the high qualities of Jayavarman IV. The back face of the inscription mentions the name of Sakalavindu as the teacher of Jayavarman IV. This talk aims to examine several inscriptions which shed light on the life of Sakalavindu in connection with Sadāśiva, who is mentioned in the last stanza of the inscription.

What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Inscriptions? Reflections from the Epigraphy of Southeast Asia

Dr. Gregory Kourilsky

What is an inscription? Although this question may appear trivial, it has barely been raised by scholars working on Southeast Asia, whether epigraphists, historians or anthropologists. Obviously, an epigraph is more than “something written on something,” as the Greek etymology of the term (ἐπίγραφη) suggests. European dictionaries define epigraphy as “the study of inscriptions made on durable materials, such as stone, clay or metal,” which is roughly how this discipline is understood in academic circles. However, some specialists of other cultural areas – ancient Greece, Rome, Mesopotamia – have questioned the relevance of this broad definition and reflected on the implicit usage of the inscribed letters rather than the explicit message they convey.

Drawing on exemplifying inscriptions from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Burma and beyond, this presentation addresses this epistemological and seminal question. In particular, it aims to examine, from the perspective of the “epigraphic habit” of Southeast Asia, what some have identified as the distinctive features of an inscription with regard to other forms of writing – namely legibility, publicity, visibility, durability, and communicability. Eventually, an attempt will be made to suggest some alternative views.

Is Dvārvatī present? Evidence from the Recently Discovered Wat Phra Ngam Inscription

Dr. Sombat Mangmeesukhsiri

Dr. Kangvol Khatshima

Dvārvatī was Krishna's ideal city in the Mahabharata, India's great epic. Since Southeast Asia is heavily influenced by Indian culture, several Indian cultural influences have persisted to the present day, such as naming the city after the magnificent city of Dvārvatī. However, due to a lack of adequate evidence, the precise location of the Dvārvatī in Southeast Asia cannot be specified.

Recent excavations at Wat Phra Ngam, a modern monastery in the heart of Nakhon Pathom town in Thailand, uncovered a previously unknown inscription. It was carved on a sandstone slab written in the Pallava script which has never been seen before in Southeast Asia. Some Thai epigraphists refer to the script as the “Balloon script” due to its resemblance to balloons. Apart from the unique script, it is also noteworthy that this inscription makes specific reference to Dvārvatī. Perhaps the inscription provides evidence supporting the location of the ancient city Dvārvatī. Thus, an in-depth examination of this inscription is extremely important for both epigraphic and archaeological research.

The Complexity of Typology and Labels for Ancient Scripts in Mainland Southeast Asia

Mr. Hunter Watson

The categories and labels used to typify ancient script styles attested by inscriptions in Mainland Southeast Asia from the early historic period form an established tradition. Common script types for this period include Pallava, Post-Pallava, Old Khmer, Old Mon, among others. However, it is arguable that traditional categories and labels create complications regarding how an inscription is contextualized in relation to other artifacts and archaeological sites. These categories and labels are also restrictive by directing interpretations to conform to existing paradigms. Some scholars have questioned the suitability of certain labels, noting how they can be misleading. I further argue traditional script categories are temporally bounded, which is problematic because palaeographic analyses are frequently cited to date archaeological sites and artifacts, yet there has been little critical assessment of the divisions or chronology of script typologies for early Mainland Southeast Asia. My objective is not to suggest the traditional model is inaccurate, but rather to draw attention to the complexity of the existing framework.

The CIK and DHARMA Research Programs: Inventory, Study and Dissemination of Epigraphic Data

Dr. Dominique Soutif

This presentation aims to show how the technological means available today allow us to manage the large number of documents and data necessary for the study of inscriptions. We will also emphasise the importance of these new tools, when it is necessary to go beyond the scale of the Khmer world, and extend the study to other related corpora from other Indianised kingdoms or India itself.

The Current State of Cambodian Epigraphy Education and Publication

Mr. Hun Chhunteng

It is well known that the study of Cambodian epigraphy has been established and promoted by western scholars, the French in particular, since the late 19th century to the present. The bulk of teaching and publication on this subject has been conducted abroad with French and English as the working languages. In Cambodia, teaching activities and publication of Khmer inscriptions through articles and books composed in Khmer have been active since 1993. This talk presents a short history of the teaching of Cambodian epigraphy within Cambodia since the founding of the 2nd Kingdom and delves into greater detail about its current state. Many institutions are promoting this field through teaching and publications by Cambodian scholars. Khmer epigraphy is only taught at the university level. For some reasons, which are explained in this talk, various programs provide different credits for the subject.

CENTER FOR KHMER STUDIES

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