

## **Adapting an existing script to strange languages: Cases of Indic scripts in Mainland Southeast Asia**

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Indic script is assumed to be originally designed to write, or more accurately "record" sounds of Prākṛit. As such, its system is closely linked with phonological and morphophonological characteristics of Prākṛit: open-syllableness, the frequency of vowel /a/, vowel grade, *sandhī* phenomena etc.

Indic script was adopted by people in Southeast Asia such as Malay, Cham, Khmer, Mon, Pyu to write sounds of their own languages which are non-Indo-Aryan, as well as original Aryan languages like Prākṛit and Sanskrit. The scripts adapted to the languages were furthermore accepted to other people (e.g. Khmer→Thai→Lao, Mon→Burmese→Shan).

When a script originally designed for a language is adopted to a different language, a part of original writing system tends to be changed for adaptation. The changes occurred in Southeast Asian Indic scripts are often more drastic than in Indian Indic scripts (in a broader sense) because the transfers of writing system in the former case often occurred beyond language families with characteristics fairly different from each other. On the other hand, it is also not rare that a writing system already well-established somehow determines (or restricts) another writing system for a new language.

In this presentation I will exemplify several aspects of adaptation of Indic script to languages in Southeast Asia, mostly in mainland. I will take up the four topics below: (1) sound segmentation, (2) choice of glyphs, (3) introducing new glyphs, and (4) "class change" of vowel letter {a}.