

# សាត្រាស្លឹកវិក

## Palm Leaf Books

*Satraa* is the Khmer word for the palm leaf book. *Satraa* were written in Khmer or Pali (the language of Theravada Buddhism) and covered a variety of subjects including the teachings of the Buddha, stories of the Buddha's past lives and chants, as well as history, science, math, and medicine. The practice dates to before the Angkor Period (9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century).

*Satraa* are made by cutting dried palm leaves into strips of the same size and inscribing them with a dry stylus (no ink). A mixture of lamp soot and oil is then applied to the surface and allowed to soak into the inscribed characters. The excess solution is wiped off. The strips are then bound together with string between wood boards of the same size.

*Satraa* are relatively fragile and decay quickly in Cambodia's humid weather, so they had to be copied on a regular basis. However, copying the texts was part of a monk's education, providing an opportunity for focused study not only of the content but also language use and writing style. During the Khmer Rouge period (1975-1980) many of these manuscripts were purposely destroyed or just left to rot. Much of Cambodia's history and Buddhist heritage was lost at this time.



Image from [Southeast Asia Digital Library](#), at Northern Illinois University.