

## THE DELIBERATE USE OF FOREIGN VOCABULARY BY THE KHMER: CHANGING FASHIONS, METHODS AND SOURCES

In writing their own language Khmer sometimes choose for effect vocabulary which not only is foreign but is consciously felt to be foreign. For example, Thai terms for everyday objects are found in early Khmer poetry, and French words occur here and there in modern novels. In neither case is the use due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary in Khmer; the foreign vocabulary is deliberately chosen. This essay represents an attempt to gather the evidence of such conscious use of foreign words in the various genres of Khmer literature, and to consider the reasons for it. The relevant "contexts" range through the centuries, from 611 AD to modern times, wherever linguistic documentation in Cambodian is available (though emphasis is given to the modern period). Throughout, an interpretation of "meaning" is applied which refers less to the literal translation value of a term than to the effect which the deliberate use of a foreign term may have or have had, as Khmer attitudes to foreign language sources and to foreign powers have changed through the centuries.

The Khmer lexicon includes a large body of fully integrated loan words, principally from the Sanskrit and Pali languages of India, but also from Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese and from European languages (chiefly French but also Portuguese and English). Most of these borrowings, however, were probably absorbed into the language unconsciously, and over time, being gradually naturalized to fit as far as possible the native phonological system. They thereby acquired currency in both the spoken and written languages and were used by Khmer speakers without a thought for their origin. Such borrowings, to be referred to as "established loans", are not the primary concern of this essay. Here I am concerned with the question of why, at various points of history, words of one foreign language rather than another were cited or consciously borrowed. Such borrowings were often so short-lived that almost no attempt was made to modify the words to suit the Khmer phonological system. In other cases consciously borrowed vocabulary was used so much that it was Khmerified, yet its use was still deliberately reserved for a particular style of writing.

In the search for illustrative material the net has been cast quite widely; yet for reasons of space only a small selection of the examples found could be presented here. When consulting texts from the past, it was not always easy to be sure when a foreign form was used as a deliberate affectation (i.e., merely because it was a word from a particular high-prestige foreign language) and when it was used of necessity (i.e., because no Khmer term would have been satisfactory). Whatever the case, unless or until a word became an "established loan", a conscious use of a foreign word was

TABLE I

<i>Period</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>Language Source</i>
The Pre-Angkor and Angkor Periods (7th to 14th centuries AD)	Inscriptions on stone	Sanskrit Pali
The Middle Period (16th or 19th centuries AD)	Inscriptions on stone	Pali
	Verse-novels	Sanskrit + Pali, the High Language, including the Royal Vocabulary Pali Thai
	<i>Cbap</i>	Pali
The Early Modern Period (19th and early 20th centuries)	Prose* and Poetry**	Sanskrit + Pali, the High Language, including the Royal Vocabulary Pali French
The Modern Period (Mid-20th century)	Journals, conversation	French
	Journals and official circles	Sanskrit + Pali, the New Vocabulary
	Fiction	Sanskrit + Pali, the High Language Sanskrit + Pali, the New Vocabulary French Thai English
All periods	All genres	(Chinese) (Vietnamese)

\*Works specially consulted: Chronicles, Folktales, *Gatilok*, *Kambujasuriyā* articles.

\*\* Works specially consulted: 19th century lyric poetry, *Dum Dāv*, *Nirās Aᅅgar Vatt*, *Bimbābilāp*.

involved. Certain features of usage can help in general to distinguish self-conscious borrowing. I found that: (a) in deliberate borrowing, a whole phrase of the foreign language was often used rather than individual loan words arranged in Khmer syntactical order; (b) foreign terms used for effect often appeared only for a short historical period; and (c) in modern times, after the standardization of Khmer spelling, newly adopted foreign words were conspicuous by the variety of their "Khmer" spellings.

The results of my study are set out on p. 150 in five sections, each of which deals with a distinct epoch.<sup>1</sup> These sections are subdivided according to genre. For the sake of clarity the table lays out the categories of analysis.

### THE PRE-ANGKOR AND ANGKOR PERIODS (7TH TO 14TH CENTURIES AD)

These centuries saw the establishment of Sanskrit as the supplier of new vocabulary in many fields, being the language of social prestige and of literature. Loan words relating to law, religion, and politics, and abstract ideas in general, were absorbed into Khmer and were naturalized both phonologically and grammatically.<sup>2</sup> Most of them were destined to remain as part of the Khmer lexicon, though sometimes with changed meaning, until modern times.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, it became the practice to use Sanskrit for all elevated linguistic activities. The educated elite of Cambodia read and wrote Sanskrit; and it is clear that there must have been much self-conscious use of the language in their conversation and private writing. Our evidence of deliberate borrowing is, however, quite limited. It is certain that paens to the gods and kings were composed entirely in Sanskrit poetry, whereas native Khmer was reserved for practical matters. At a more everyday level, Sanskrit was frequently adopted in composing personal names, where Khmer would have done just as well. For examples of the latter practice we may go back as far as the seventh century (though the tradition continued for at least six more centuries), when dancers, singers, musicians and officials were given Sanskrit names to specify their calling. Artists typically obtained pretty names, such as "Spring Jasmine" (*Vasantamallikā*) for a dancer, "Slender-limbed" (*Taṅvangī*) for a singer and "Beloved lady-friend" (*Sakhipriya*) for a musician. Officials, on the other hand, received more dignified appellations, such as "Protector of the Law" (*Dharmaraksā*).<sup>4</sup>

With the establishment of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the 11th century, the Khmer language gained a new source of loans in Pali. Our early evidence of borrowing is slight, but there are a few extant inscriptions of the Angkor kingdom in which conspicuous Pali terms occur. One of these, K.144, an inscription of the 12th to 13th centuries, is lexically so much more Pali than Khmer that one has to grope for the Khmer syntax in the confusion of words. The inscription illustrates deliberate borrowing especially well, since much of the Pali occurs in whole phrases, such as *lokuttara dhamma* (the Law, which is transcendent).

## THE MIDDLE PERIOD (16TH TO 19TH CENTURIES AD)

The stone inscriptions of this period have a totally different character from those of the ancient kingdom. As in the Angkorean epoch, most such inscriptions were created to record some act of merit: the freeing of slaves, the repairing of statues, or the offering of material goods to the local community of monks. But where the inscribers of Angkor distinguished sharply between texts in elaborate Sanskrit poetry and texts in terse Khmer prose, their Middle Period successors wrote in a uniform literary Khmer prose style which combined the expression of religious zeal with the provision of mundane information.<sup>5</sup> Some of these later inscriptions were written in person by members of the royal family, some by less eminent officials; not a few contain details of the personal lives of the writer or of the historical events of his time.

In the language of these Middle Period inscriptions it is the Pali loan words, misspelled but clearly identifiable, which serve to underscore the religious fervour of the authors.<sup>6</sup> Much of this Pali terminology, such as *upāsak* (layman) and *sāsana* ([Buddhist] teaching), was probably already entrenched in the everyday language of the household, and the misspellings in themselves indicate most interestingly the degree to which the borrowed words had been naturalized. In addition to this quotidian Buddhist vocabulary, however, the authors of the inscriptions seem to make deliberate use of religious vocabulary of an elevated and specialized kind, again often in whole phrases. Thus we read in *Inscriptions Modernes d'Angkor* (IMA) 2 of the Queen Mother's "righteous faith, threefold" (*tribidh sucarit saddhā*); of her "participating in a work of merit (*anumodanā*)"; of her meditation on "impermanence" (*aniccā*).<sup>7</sup> She prays that the "benefit [arising out of] her merits" (*phalānisāṅ*) may achieve for her in a future life the greatest of all boons: to be born as a great man (*mahāpuris*) during the time when the Buddha will return to earth, and to hear him preach the "thirty-seven elements of supreme enlightenment" (*sattatimsavarabodhipakkhiyā[dhammā]*). Sometimes a Pali phrase familiar to the faithful is quoted; a reference to the ceremony at which a novice is ordained as a monk contains the words "with the *ehi bikkhu*" (which begins with the words "Come, monk").

The contemporary names also show the influence of the dominant source languages of the period. For example, eminent dignitaries of the Buddhist community are given appellations like Pavaradhammā (The Noble Law) and Mahāpalī (Great Pali [Scholar]).<sup>8</sup> A servant offered for the care of statues is referred to as Mrs. Suddh (Pure) and a layman, who with his wife carries out an act of merit, as young Mr. Jet [for *jetthā*] (Best).<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted, however, that in general the language of the IMA, though very much influenced by Pali, is characterized by many features of native Khmer origin. The devices of reduplication, repetition and assonance now appear in the writing, giving the impression that the Khmer language is being consciously used as a means of elegant expression in prose.

It is in the Middle Period that we find the earliest extant non-

*The Pre-Angkor and Angkor periods (7th to 14th Centuries AD)*

inscriptional literature: long “verse-novels,” retelling the religious tales of India. This genre includes the one composition which may, because of the extent to which it became a Khmer story and because of the profound influence it has had on Khmer culture, be termed an epic,<sup>10</sup> namely the *Reamker [Rāmakerti]*, the Khmer version of the Rāmāyaṇa. Otherwise the bulk of these long works consists of Jātaka stories. The ancient kingdom of Angkor had established the tradition that Sanskrit was the preeminent language for literature. But after the 15th century texts were no longer composed wholly in Sanskrit; rather the literary style of Khmer poetry was “elevated” by the deliberate insertion of Sanskrit terminology. At the same time, the close connection of the Jātaka tales with Buddhism caused the deliberate inclusion of Pali as well. The conscious borrowings of the early poets were copied by their successors and gradually a body of Sanskrit and Pali vocabulary was formed with helped to crystallize a distinct literary style. Analysis of the deliberately chosen and consciously used loans which form this “high language” reveals that the words most frequently occurring are in fact the Sanskrit or Pali translations for very ordinary phenomena, such as the following:

(a) Features of the mundane world:

earth	<i>dharaṇī</i> or <i>basudhā</i>	sun	<i>āditya</i>	mountain	<i>girī</i>
sky, air	<i>ākāś</i> or <i>vehā[s]</i>	moon	<i>cand</i>	river	<i>nadī</i>
water	<i>gaṅgā</i>	night	<i>ādhṛāt</i>	forest	<i>bṛikṣ</i>
			[Skt. “midnight”]		[Skt. “tree”]
fire	<i>aggī</i>	day	<i>dimakar</i>	path	<i>adhvā</i>
wind	<i>bāy</i>	world	<i>bibhab-lok</i>	flower	<i>puspā, pupphā</i>
rain	<i>biruṇ</i>			bird	<i>paksī, paksā</i>
				animal	<i>tiracchān</i>

(b) Certain possessions of the ruling class (not necessarily of royalty):

clothing	<i>bastr, bharaṇa:</i>	home	<i>sthān</i>
jewels	<i>ratn</i>	garden	<i>udyān</i>
perfume	<i>gandh</i>	horse	<i>ajineyy</i> or <i>assa</i>

(c) Attributes (adjectives, epithets and similes) of the main characters:<sup>11</sup>

	Hero		King		Heroine
master of men	<i>narapati</i>	serene <sup>12</sup>	<i>ksem ksānt</i>	beautiful	<i>kalyān</i>
handsome	<i>subhān</i>	educated	<i>munī</i>	golden	<i>subaṇṇ</i>
mighty	<i>mahimā</i>	upholder of the earth	<i>bhūdhar</i>	unblemished	<i>nirmal</i>
victorious	<i>[jāñ] jāy</i>	[like] a roaring lion	<i>sihanād</i>	divine	<i>deb</i>
[like] the sun	<i>āditya</i>			goddess	<i>debī</i>
				jewel	<i>ratn</i>
				pure	<i>parisuddha</i>
				[like] the moon	<i>cānd</i>

(d) Parts of the body; movements or actions of the body, and kinship terms (for gods and royalty).<sup>13</sup>

hand	<i>hast</i>	give	<i>pradān</i>	elder sibling	<i>jeṭṭhā</i>
face	<i>bhaktr</i>	die	<i>sugat</i>	mother	<i>jananī</i>

(e) Certain numerals, some associated with religious or mythical objects:

1	[alone, sole, lonely]	<i>ek</i>	16	[heavens]	<i>soḷas</i>
2	[ ]	<i>do, dve</i>	33	[heaven of the 33]	<i>trāytriṅs</i>
3	[e.g., worlds or jewels]	<i>trai</i>	1000	[goddesses]	<i>sahass</i>
4	[e.g., pillars or ministers]	<i>catu</i>			
5	[e.g., senses]	<i>pañca</i>			
6	[levels of heaven of desire]	<i>cha</i>			
9	[degrees of purity in gold]	<i>nabv</i>			
10	[directions]	<i>das</i>			

A parallel “secularization” is noticeable in the way in which the High Language now began to be manipulated to fit the demands of poetic meters with regard to numbers of syllables and required rhymes. One finds the Indian inflexions *ā*, *ī* and *o* added to the truncated forms of naturalized loan words to supply optional extra syllables and expand the choice of rhymes; these inflexions are often casually used without any reference to the meaning they conveyed in the original language.

The Middle Period is also notable for the practice of citing messages of Pali (mentioned above in connection with Middle Khmer inscriptions [IMA]) in the verse-novels which retell the Jātaka tales. Quite often one finds an introductory page or two in Pali, intended to make the dedication of the work to the Buddha. Deliberate borrowing of Thai vocabulary also occurred from the beginning of this era. In the Reamker [*Rāmakerti*], for example, there are a score of such usages, many appearing in the older parts of the work, written in the 16th century.<sup>14</sup> The list includes several “everyday” words obviously chosen for literary effect—e.g., *khāv* (news), *tām* (black), and *taeñ* (red)—as well as some military terms like *huoṅā* (chief) and *hmuot* (unit, company).<sup>15</sup> Other borrowings look like straightforward substitutions for Khmer words, but may in fact represent objects which are not identical with the objects referred to by the Thai originals (e.g., *klīñ* [sunshade] or *kuñcae* [lock]). Even *mīoēñ* (city), occurring in a context where roads and fortifications are described, may indicate a foreign kind of city. Other borrowings include the names of entertainers and of certain trappings of animals. Thai numerals, other than those which formed established loans in Khmer, were sometimes used for effect, e.g., /paet/ (eight) and /si:/ (four) in the opening passage of the verse-novel *Rīoēñ Sañkh Silp Jāy*.<sup>16</sup> Imitation of the Thai became especially prevalent in the 19th century. By that time many Thai loans, such as *tuoñ* (round [of moon or face]), *bhiliēñ* (tutor, nanny), *sāvjai* (elderly court lady) and *nuon* (tender, sweet) were part of the regular stock of poetic vocabulary. Khmer poets had also by then acquired the habit of imitating and experimenting with Thai meters.

In the *cbap* (as in other poetry of which the themes were not of Indian origin) the typical borrowings are rather different. This group of didactic moral poems, much loved and quoted, is both homely and Buddhist in character. Practical advice to laymen of all social strata concerning proper moral and social conduct is given by means of examples and comparisons drawn from nature and from peasant life. The poets who composed *cbap*

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used an appropriately simple style. The High Language was still used to a certain extent: kinship terms employed to refer to readers treated them as if they were royal (e.g., *janak* and *jananī* for “father” and “mother”), while poetic phrases like *puspagandh* (fragrance of flowers) also appear. But on the whole the vocabulary is much more influenced by Pali.

The deliberate use of Pali vocabulary was a constant reminder of the Buddhist faith, the source of the morality which the *cbap* gently advocated. “Oneself” is often *ātmā*; “untruth” is *musāvād*; “kindness” is *mettā*, “understanding” *ñāṇ*. A person must not fall into erring (*bālā*) ways, becoming greedy (*lobho*) or pleasure-loving. Otherwise, he will forget all about the sacred precepts (*sīl*), alms-giving (*dān*), and increase of understanding (*ñānavuddhī*) and will fail to have the virtue (*pārāmī*) needed to lead others. As in the Middle Khmer inscriptions, Pali phrases are sometimes quoted, as though to emphasize that it is the voice of the Buddhist brotherhood which is speaking to the layman through this poetry. Not surprisingly, certain metaphors encountered in the Middle Khmer inscriptions—e.g., “crossing the ocean (*samudr*) of life” and “proceeding along the hard way (*kantār*) occur in the *cbap* and in later poetry.

### EARLY MODERN PERIOD (19TH TO EARLY 20TH CENTURIES)

Although Western influences started to be felt in general and were to increase greatly with the establishment of the French Protectorate, their effect on Khmer literature throughout the period was slight. The style of the prose works of this period is straightforward and unselfconscious. The use of the Royal Vocabulary is generally restricted to cases of necessity. It occurs throughout the (royal) Chronicles, but only in those folktales or *Gatilok* stories where royal personages are involved.

In the poetry of the period, however, the kinship terms of the Royal Vocabulary are sometimes used, as in the *cbap*, whether or not they refer to royalty, and the High Language is often employed for stereotyped themes such as sunsets and sunrises. Basically, however, the poets of this period do not concern themselves with elevating their style by means of borrowed vocabulary. Instead, they use the Khmer descriptive and phonoaesthetic vocabulary to great effect, particularly in alliterative sequences such as *seb sam sañ sār* (chat pleasantly in company), or *dīeñ dam driev droḥ* (the calling [of birds] as they go to rest).

The conscious use of Pali continues to be in evidence. In the folktales we find it in the form of Pali-like gibberish which a trickster chants in order to demonstrate, to the people who he is about to cheat, that he is a man of learning. In the *Gatilok*, a more formal collection of retold Indian tales, the concluding moral is given by a Pali word, never an established loan, denoting the fault of character or the emotion illustrated by each story. Among such works are *vippatisār* (remorse), *lobhacetanā* (covetous thought) and *mahicchātā* (ambition).

A little self-conscious Pali also appears in lyric poetry when the subject is religion rather than love. Poets, explaining their intention to turn from

the travails of passion to their Buddhist faith, often say what the authors of some of the Middle Khmer inscriptions had expressed in prose: a wish to be born again at the time of the Buddha's return.

The short "verse-novel" *Bimbābilāp* (which includes a short Jātaka story but is chiefly about the grief of the Buddha's wife when he leaves her and the court for a life of contemplation) is worth mentioning in connection with Pali since a considerable amount of difficult Pali religious vocabulary is used, evidently on purpose, despite the fact that the ordinary reader would not be likely to understand it, e.g., *satipaṭṭhānupatthambhak* (encouraging contemplation), *dhammabhisamay* (understanding of the Truth), and so on. Familiar Sanskrit loans are sometimes given their Pali spelling, e.g. *baṇṇ* instead of *barn* (colour).

Nonetheless, from the last decades of the 19th century onwards, a steady influx of French words were absorbed and naturalized as loans. Sometimes the spelling of French loans indicated their origin even though their form no longer did so, e.g., /so:vðə/ (*chauffeur*) spelled with final r, or /poh/ (*poste*) spelled with st and syllabary /e/ after the vowel. In other cases neither the spelling nor the pronunciation would remind Khmers of their origin, e.g., /kɔ̃mple:/ (*complet* [suit]) was not given its final t and had the form of a Khmer minor disyllable.

Alongside these established loans there were words which were very familiar and which were to stay in the language until the postwar period, but which had untranslatable meanings. Such were /msiə(r)/ (*Monsieur*)—/lô:k/ did not convey all that was to be conveyed about the foreignness of the person thus alluded to; /re:sī: dɔŋ/ (*résident*)—only the French term could bear the full implications of the position of this representative of colonial power; and /rò:məŋ/ (*roman*), indicating prose fiction, a hitherto unknown genre. Sometimes a complete French phrase was cited, e.g. /kù:vê:rnə(r) dɔ: la kɔ:səŋsin/ (*gouverneur de la Cochinchine*).<sup>17</sup> When such relatively unfamiliar French words were used, the Khmer form, indicating the pronunciation as above, was usually followed by the French word in roman letters. This habit of adding what was in fact a key to the meaning was to persist and be much in evidence in later journalese; it indicated an appeal to those readers whose education in French had a formal character.

## THE MODERN PERIOD (MID-20TH CENTURY)

In the post-World War II period, when a substantial number of young people were being educated at French universities, the language of journals and of conversation among members of the ruling class was interlarded with consciously cited French terms concerning politics, philosophy, literature, etc. Quite apart from the abstract nouns which French could usefully supply, young intellectuals familiar with French also appreciated the democratic simplicity of French pronouns in contrast with the status-indicating Khmer system. In the 1950s I remember hearing a group of educated Phnom Penh Cambodians of various ages and social levels using *vous* to each other in a political discussion, apparently because



the appreciated the equality which *vous* suggested. How conscious Khmer were of their language's explicit exposition of differences of social status is illustrated in a novel set in the prewar era where an officious local governor cannot bring himself to speak politely to his subordinates by using /*khnom*/ for "I" or "me", though he knows he should not now use the familiar /*ʎap*/.<sup>18</sup> The result is that his underlings all become used to understanding what he says even with the pronouns "I" and "me" omitted!

In the immediate aftermath of Cambodia's independence from France, achieved in 1953, the wish to make the Khmer language capable of expressing modern ideas without using French was strong. It was sometimes expressed as an aim to make the Khmer language "the equal of any."<sup>19</sup> In fact, Khmer has a vocabulary of considerable richness. But for abstract terms, Khmer had, on the whole, either to build up compounds using verbs and a nominalizing device or to borrow from Sanskrit, Pali, and French. It thus seemed necessary to replace abstract nouns, as well as a great quantity of modern technical terms hitherto automatically adopted from French, with a new "Khmer" vocabulary. The existing Cambodian language could, with some difficulty, be manipulated to provide the new terms by the process of translating definitions. Compound neologisms such as *grāp'-paek-cheh* (seed-break-catch fire) for "incendiary bomb," could be absorbed if there was time for gradual growth; but a chemistry text book would not be easy to understand if it was full of such unfamiliar compounds of which, since there was no established practice of using hyphens or spaces between words, the boundaries would not be easily perceived. With regard to political terms, on the other hand, an aura of newness was a real advantage, since they were of paramount importance in those modernizing days. For all this novel, non-colonial vocabulary, abstract and technical, Khmer intellectuals turned to Pali and Sanskrit, the prestigious languages of older times, as naturally as the West turns to Greek and Latin. A "new vocabulary" of over 3,000 terms was thus created, one which is always regarded as being Khmer, but which we can legitimately view as a deliberate use of foreign vocabulary.

The creation of this New Vocabulary was the responsibility of a Cultural Commission, founded as a result of the difficulties encountered in composing the text of the Constitution of 1946. This body prepared lists of French words for which a translation was needed and received lists of French technical terms submitted to them by official bodies. The new translations, called "cultural words" (*bāky vappadharm*) were published in 1950 by the Ministry of Education as a short dictionary titled *Saddānukram pāramñ khmaer*, and also appeared serially in *Kambujasuriyā*.<sup>20</sup> For each French word the commission either took an existing French loan, usually one long-established but infrequently used, and "matched" it to the relevant French word (e.g., *sundarakathā* [elegant discourse] with *discours*) or they "created," using Sanskrit and Pali, a new word (e.g., *sannisid*, from the Pali *sannisīdati* [sink down, settle] for

*conférence*). In some cases the new words were intended to cover only some of the meanings of the French word, while in other cases they were intended to translate all the meanings. Thus *sundarakathā* was to translate *discours* only in its meaning of “prepared, detailed talk to an assembly,” while *sannisīd* was to cover both meanings of *conférence* (“meeting” and “lecture”).<sup>21</sup>

With the rather sudden influx into newspapers and official documents of long, unfamiliar words, the Khmer public had to learn quickly. Radio talks by Sam Thang, a member of the Cultural Commission and later the author of a dictionary of the New Vocabulary, were subsequently published in *Kambujasuriyā*.<sup>22</sup> They explained just what the Cultural Commission intended a new word to mean and described how to go about pronouncing some of these 6- and 7-syllable words. The procedures and difficulties of the Cultural Commission may be observed by reading the articles by Neang Hu and Sam Thang published in various issues of *Kambujasuriyā* in 1960.<sup>23</sup> They show that the public was dismayed at the quantity of new words and grumbled openly. Teachers and officials wrote in, asking probing questions. What was the difference between the three words for “girl” (*kaññā*, *nāri* and *yuvatī*)? Why should *antara* be pronounced /ʔontərə/ in the new word /ʔontərəci:ət/ (*antarajāti*) meaning “international” when it was pronounced /ʔondo:/ in the familiar /ʔondo:thi:ən/ (*antaradhān*) meaning “destruction”. What was wrong with calling a train /rətèh-phlỳ:ŋ/ (cart fire)? Neang Hu and Sam Thang had their answers ready. *Kaññā*, *nāri* and *yuvatī* were respectively “girl not yet of marriageable age,” “woman” and “girl of marriageable age” (a distinction, one may add, which novelists of the period ignored). The different pronunciations of the same Indian prefix (*antara*) in the two Khmer borrowings was due to the naturalization of the older borrowing. The new word for “train” was invented because the Railway Board had asked for “translation into Khmer of equal status with the French word” of various technical words including “train”. “However,” declared the Cultural Commission through the medium of Neang Hu and Sam Thang, “people will not be wrong in ordinary speech if they continue to use /rətèh-phlỳ:ŋ/”!

The articles in *Kambujasuriyā* indicate that the Cultural Commission sometimes had difficulty in controlling its lexical offspring. They complained, for example, that they intended the translation of *indépendance* to be *issarabhāb* (powerfulness, condition of overlordship) but “everybody thinks it is *ekarājy* (single kingdom, one power).” The new word *pañnadūt* (sheet-messenger), a translation for the French *planton* (office-boy, orderly), had been produced independently of the Cultural Commission and become widely used. The Cultural Commission felt, however, that this term had an unfortunate association with *dūt* (envoy) and thus could not be tolerated. No offence was intended to office-boys. “We want you to have a title,” it declared through the pages of *Kambujasuriyā* (to such office-boys as might read this learned journal), “but office-boys do not represent the government officially as envoys.” Accordingly, the world *lekhhari* (letter-taker) received the official

blessing. In contrast to *issarabhāb*, it came into general use.

Fortunately for Khmer in official circles, who needed to acquire the New Vocabulary quickly, many components of the new words were already familiar as established loans. Thus *kamm* (fact, action) occurs in many compounds, e.g., *prati-kamm* (jet [plane], *French avion de ré-action*); *niyam* (to tend to) translated *-isme* in such words as *prākāṭ-niyam* (*réal-isme*); *vidyā* (study) is used for *-ologie*, e.g., *citta-vidyā* (*psych-ologie*). It frequently proved possible to compose a new word by means of a straight translation of the components of the French term (itself often of Greek or Latin origin) into Sanskrit or Pali (as in the above instances), though some of the results, such as *ek-saṅthān* for the noun *uni-forme*, seem odd because we are no longer conscious of the two components of our own Western compound. (The new compounds naturally had no relationship with any attested Sanskrit or Pali compounds of the same form). As time went on, familiarity with the Indian components of the new compounds, such as those mentioned above as well as *pubv-* (pre-, fore-), *-āgār* (building, place), and *-ālay* (repository), increased. As a result, some interesting lexical changes took place. For example, the term *-bhāb* (state of affairs), from being used as a device to form some new abstract nouns, such as *sukhuma-bhāb* (detail-state of affairs) for “subtlety,” later crept into use as the first component of compounds conveying the meaning “-ness,”<sup>24</sup> e.g., *bhāb l-a* (beauty). This method thus supplemented the two previous ways of turning an adjectival verb into an abstract noun—by infixation (*l-am-a*) and by using *sektī* (matter) before it.

The new requirements caused novel, specialized meanings to be conferred on some old-fashioned loans. *Siddhi*, for example, had long been naturalized as /syt/ (power), but it was now brought in as the new, unnaturalized /svtthi/ (rights). Similarly, *śilpa* had long been reduced to /sɣl/ (knowledge of the supernatural), but it was now reintroduced as the unnaturalized form *svlāpa*’ (Art, the Arts). Some old loans retained the same pronounced form but acquired new meanings. Thus /samay/ (time, period) now obtained, through its occurrence in the much-used phrase /samay thmvy/ (modern times), the meaning “up-to-date,” or “fashionable” even when used without the word /thmvy/ (new).

The process of implementing the New Vocabulary may be observed in newspapers and journals from the 1950s onwards. Frequently the French term which was being replaced would follow the new word in parentheses, e.g., *ādideb-ksatrī(y)* (*dieu-roi*).<sup>25</sup> Soon words such as *ekarājy* (independence) and *mātuprades* (motherland) were familiar enough. Sometimes the metaphoric meaning of a French word was transferred to its replacement. Thus the Sanskrit *pariyākās*, adopted to translate *atmosphère*, acquired the latter’s secondary meaning of “political (and social) atmosphere.” The old Khmer word *amnāc*, denoting “power” in the abstract sense, took on the secondary meaning of *pouvoir* to refer to “a powerful state”. Alongside these partial neologisms such old compound expressions as *dīk tī* (water land) for “territory” and *cuḥ cūl* (go down enter) for “to submit to” remained in journalistic use, while vivid combinations of old words to express new

political or technical conceptions were also developed: e.g., *phliēn kralai* (unadulterated rain) for “poison gas”, and *campāṃṇī chmak* (fighting one-who-catches) for “guerrilla warfare.”<sup>26</sup>

As time went on the New Vocabulary was so much used in journals and official documents that it continued the process, started by French loans, of changing, through its predominantly nominal character, the syntax and literary style of modern news writing.<sup>27</sup> The long, involved sentences were so similar in construction to the sentences of French that they were easier to understand if French was borne in mind, and were probably a mystery to those Cambodians who knew no French.

Quite apart from the fact that Sanskrit and Pali forms were used in the postwar period to develop the New Vocabulary, the general prestige of these languages is visible in the continued use of the High Language in specific contexts. In the title of a well-known magazine of the 1960s, *Nagar Khmaer*, the literary word for “kingdom” appears. Freedom movements adopted Pali-derived names: for example, Khmer Serei (from the Pali *serīn* [independent]) and Issarak (from the Pali *issara* [master]). Norodom Sihanouk, however, did not adopt the New Vocabulary wholeheartedly. His self-bestowed title Samdech Eu (*samtec ū*) or “Prince-Father” was composed of native vocabulary, and he addressed the people in homely language as “brothers and sisters” (*pañ p-ūn*), while referring to them in the third person as “Khmer children” (*kūn khmaer*).

Modern prose fiction started late in Cambodia by comparison with the rest of Southeast Asia. It was only in the late 1930s, several years after the installation of a printing-house in Phnom-Penh, that the new genre really came into existence. The first published novel was Rim Kin’s *Suphāt* (“Sophat”) in 1938. In the 1950s, however, novels began to be published in quantity. In them two features of literary composition which had previously been characteristic of different genres are found together: the conscious use of the High Language, once mainly characteristic of Indian-derived themes retold in verse, and realism, found most in folklore and *chap* (though there are some amusing and very colloquial passages in the verse-novels which cannot be ignored).<sup>28</sup> A novel was a literary composition, and therefore had to be dignified by the use of the literary language; yet, for the first time, there was now *carte blanche* for authors to write at length about what ordinary people said and did.

The influence of the French novel was strong. In the early years of *Kambujasuriyā* French fiction was regularly translated and serialized: Chateaubriand’s *Paul et Virginie*, for example, appeared in the issues of 1955. Some authors, perhaps with nineteenth century French novels in mind, began every chapter by setting the scene with a long descriptive passage in the literary style, using, that is, both the High Language, associated previously with poetry, and some of the vivid vocabulary in which the Khmer native lexicon abounds. Modern Khmer social problems formed the subject matter of most postwar fiction but the descriptions of love-scenes, lacking in traditional Cambodian restraint, and of the heroes of adventure and crime detection stories owed much to Western novels and

films. (For example, in the historical novel *Rīoēñ Brāḥ Pad Bañā Yāt* [“King Ponhea Yat”], a hero arrives on the scene just as a heroine, bound and gagged by the villain, is about to undergo a fate worse than death. With finger poised, not on the trigger, but on the equivalent part of his cross-bow, he cries, “Turn around and hands up!”)<sup>29</sup>

Some colloquial words in written form were now regularly needed and gradually they were spelled more consistently. It was now felt desirable to make it clear when direct speech was quoted and to indicate whether a sentence was a question, exclamation or statement; for these purposes, French punctuation was adopted.

The established literary language, as we have just seen, was still in use, especially in descriptive passages where authors attempted to attain as high a literary standard as possible; since literature proper had always been poetry, the language of poetry had to be used. Nonetheless, changes were at work in the type of Sanskrit and Pali borrowings. Since heroes and heroines were no longer royal now (except in historical novels), they were termed *mānab/mānavī* (young man/girl of marriageable age). The girl, no longer *debī* (goddess), could be called *yuvatī*, *kaññā* or *nārī* (young girl). Alternatively, she might be referred to as *kalyāṇ* (the beauty). At the same time adjectives tended to be indigenous Khmer words. The old-fashioned attribute of feminine perfection, *grap’ lakkh(ṇ)* ([having] every virtue), very common in folktales and verse-novels, came to be replaced by simple Khmer phrases describing characteristics traditionally admired, e.g., *subhāb rāp sā* (of modest behaviour), *santāp’ dhnāp’* (docile) or *rūp s-āt* (well turned-out, neat and trim). Yet, many a heroine was still described by the use of one adjectival verb of clear Indian origin: *anāth* (defenceless)—for there was quite a vogue for rather Victorian-style abandoned heroines.

The earliest novels were generally free of the New Vocabulary. Some had been written many years before publication and were naturally not composed in the modern style. But gradually the new words infiltrated fiction.<sup>30</sup> Initially, novelists adopted the New Vocabulary for the special purposes of avoiding French vocabulary and of associating themselves with the approved language style of the new era of independence. The degree to which the New Vocabulary was used varied widely from author to author and, depending, on the nature of the theme, from one work to another. Many novels, especially those appealing to the least literary of the readers, were composed in conversational style throughout. Sometimes just the preface of a novel was full of New Vocabulary; a statement might be made there about one or other of the political *motifs* of the period—the new flowering of Khmer literature or the recently won independence under Sihanouk’s Buddhist Socialist Republic. On the other hand, in historical novels, based on the legendary heroes of the Angkorean and post-Angkorean eras, such New Vocabulary words as *ekarāḥy* (independence), *serībhāb* (freedom) and *māsuprades* (motherland) often occur. In a play set in the post-Angkorean period, at a time when the Thai kings were fighting to extend their control into Cambodia, a Khmer who has deserted to the other side and now repents of his treachery describes himself as “an

imperialist to the bone" (*khuor cakrabatti*)!<sup>31</sup> In the same play the Cambodians are said to be fighting, not for their country (*prades*, or *sruk*) but for their "nation" (*jāti*), a more fashionable concept. Novels concerned with class struggles in the pre-Sihanouk days brought on stage the farmers, now known as *kasikar*, and their work, *kasikamm*. The working man, never classified as such before, appeared as *kammakar*. And how could romantic novels be written without the new vocabulary for "feelings" (*manosañcetanā*), "duty" (*karaṇīyakicc*), or the "scenery" (*desabhāb*) at which the lovelorn hero/heroine invariably gazes? In love stories, the heroine was often given the New Vocabulary title of *kaññā* (Miss), while hero and heroine were *yavajan* (young people or, in a political context, Youth).

Some authors brought in the New Vocabulary to an extent which seems excessive to the present writer. Very often the practice of going out of their way to use a more literary term spoils rather than embellishes the style. A neat little Khmer phrase such as *tāmn bī kmen* (ever since childhood) is clumsy when dressed up as *tāmn bī kumārabhāb*.

The lively comedy *Sampuk it me pā* ("A Nest without the Parents") by Hang Thon Hak incidentally provides some lighthearted comment on the New Vocabulary. The curtain goes up at the beginning of the play to reveal the living room of a modest house. A voice exclaims, "*Phdaḥ! Gehaḥan! Ramaṇiyathān!*" ("A house! A residence! A stately home!") Thematically, the narrator's voice is merely saying "home, sweet home!" but the use of the third word, a New Vocabulary term which indicates "place of interest to sightseers," is intended to raise a laugh. As this comedy of modern manners proceeds, the New Vocabulary supplies many key words. The young head of the family which has been deprived of its parents claims, "I have to look after the family finances—I can't [unlike the younger, modern members of the family] discuss religion (*sāsnā*), science (*vidyāsāstr*), art (*silpa*) and society studies (*saṅgamasāstr*)." The term used for "religion" here is not a new borrowing; religious vocabulary has hardly been augmented at all in the postwar period. But the words for "science" and "art" are new (though "science" [*vidyāsāstr*] was one of the earliest new terms. The form *saṅgamasāstr* suggests that the busy young head of the family confuses *saṅgamavidyā* (sociology) and the use accorded to *-sāstr* in the earliest 20th century formations for the names of fields of study. The rest of the family admire, using a new term, this *manuss karaṇīyakicc* (man of duty). A description of the typical Cambodian girl of tradition endows her with *iriyapath jā nārī khmaer* (the deportment of a Khmer young lady); she will "keep the Buddhist precepts, give alms, observe the established customs and be compassionate." The *nārī samay* (the modern miss), on the other hand, whistles, sits Western fashion (instead of on the ground with legs folded sideways), wears checked trousers, has her hair fluffed out (/bombe:/ from the French *bombé*) and thinks she is allowed to choose her own husband. The argumentative, philosophizing, guitar-playing young brother teases the family head until the latter protests that he needs peace and quiet to think about the family's needs. He explains, using a verbose sentence full of New

Vocabulary and with a syntactical construction worthy of journalism, "Give me the right (*siddhi*) to have the freedom (*seribhāb*) to fulfill my duty (*karaṇīyakicc*) with justice (*yuttidharm*), boldness and heroism (*varabhāb*)!"

The extent to which the French language remained in use was limited but interesting. On the whole, such old familiar borrowings as /būyro:/ (office), /ka:t/ (identity card), /li:se/ (college, high school), which continued (and continue) in oral usage in everyday situations, were replaced in the novels by the new words *kāriyālāy*, *paṇṇ*, and *vidyālāy*. Yet there are plenty of instances of the conscious use of French words for effect. The word /doktə(r)/ occurs in place of the old compound, composed of established Indian loans, *grū bedy*, when reference to a French-trained medical doctor is intended. The term /ma:dv:mu:əsael/ (Mademoiselle) occurs in a short story when a sixth form pupil addresses the girl he desires and wishes to impress her favourably. In some of the contexts in which they occur French words seem to be used because the French language is admired. In others, however, they are used maliciously: for example, in a detective novel, an undesirable character is referred to as /ʔa: msɨə(r)/ (that [derogatory implication] Monsieur). Sometimes it is as though the characters (or authors) are merely showing off their knowledge of French. Why else would a character in the play mentioned above say /sù:e:/ (*jouer*, play) a children's game instead of /lè:ŋ/? We might note in passing that a residual awe of the French also appears in some untraditional uses of the old Royal Vocabulary. In one novel, for example, the young hero, a newly appointed provincial official, is said to have to *gāl'* the French Governor; this term is the "classical" word for attending upon, or appearing in the presence of, Khmer royalty.<sup>32</sup>

One word borrowed from Thai which was much used in the 1950s and 1960s was /sivilai/, a Thai loan from the English "civilized". It conveyed the idea of Western-style sophistication. Cambodians had taken a great interest in the superficial effects of modern developments in Thailand. In his novel *Mālā Tuoñ Citt*, Nou Hach allows his hero to admire not only the nail varnish but also the friendly manner of a Thai girl who actually talks to an unknown man in a train. (To be sure, the same hero criticizes the widow of a Thai official who, though over fifty years of age, wears brightly coloured sarongs and puts on face-powder.) A further comment on Thailand in this story, composed after Cambodian independence but relating to the previous period (actually 1939), is made when the hero says to the Thai heroine, with a certain lack of logic, "How could I aspire to your hand? *Your* father is a rich man in a country which is fully sovereign (*ekarājy beñ dī*)!"

The remaining language from which words have deliberately been borrowed in recent times is English. The English items are not always immediately recognizable in their adapted forms and spellings. It is easy to spot /ba:y-ba:y/ (bye-bye), but less so to catch /kho:v-baoy/ (cowboy) or /svi:ŋ kō:m/ (chewing-gum).

Finally, a word is necessary on two languages which have had a strong influence on Khmer over a long period, but which seem never to be used in

writing for deliberate effect: Chinese and Vietnamese. Chinese loans, chiefly connected with cooking, trade, finance and gambling,<sup>33</sup> have been steadily infiltrating for several centuries, at least since Angkorean times. They include such household vocabulary as /toʔ/ (table) and /ʔa:v/ (shirt). Chinese novels and plays have had enough local prestige to be translated into Khmer.<sup>34</sup> China has been regarded with awe in both ancient and modern times, yet this awe has sprung from an awareness of China's political and military power, not of its language and culture. It is interesting that, during the Khmer Rouge period, new words and new uses were still being coined by reference to the traditional source, India. Thus the new word *āṅgabhāb* (age, stage of physical development) was linked with the established Indian loan *kumār* (child) to mean "children aged 6–13," and in conjunction with a word from the New Vocabulary, *calat* (mobile), to denote "mobile young people (aged 14–18)." The Vietnamese language has also supplied everyday words which have become established loans, though to a much less extent than Chinese. Examples are /ŋüə/ (Vietnamese *ngu* [to lie down] in /kda: ŋüə/ (bench) and /laŋ/ (glossy silk, taffeta, from Vietnamese *lành* [cool]). Once again, it seems that there has not been enough admiration of Vietnamese culture for deliberate citation of its vocabulary to take place.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen that in different historical contexts the Khmer enjoyed using for effect vocabulary drawn from different foreign origins. In the pre-Angkorean and Angkorean periods, admiration of Indian culture led them to use Sanskrit for poetic expression and people were often given Sanskrit names. As the practice of Buddhism became better established, from the eleventh century onwards, this religious devotion was shown in the use of Pali vocabulary both as a source of names and in the form of citations of whole phrases. In the Middle period the continuing prestige of both these Indian languages is conspicuous in the deliberate use of Sanskrit and Pali words for simple objects in order to elevate the style of Khmer poetry. Finally, in the modern period, the Khmer have resorted to Sanskrit and Pali to compose new words for technological and other modern concepts.

Quite early in the period following the fall of Angkor the affectation of Thai vocabulary in Khmer poetry (again to replace very ordinary Khmer words) suggests an admiration of Thai culture. This tendency became particularly pronounced in the nineteenth century.

The conscious use of French vocabulary seems to have had contradictory implications. In some contexts it appears to indicate admiration, in others dislike.

Finally, there is a striking lack of evidence for the deliberate use of either Chinese or Vietnamese vocabulary. This avoidance may be reasonably interpreted as indicating a cool detachment towards these languages.



## The Pre-Angkor and Angkor periods (7th to 14th Centuries AD)

1. Here I am concerned with the literary unity of each period. For an account of the parallel social and political epochs, see, for example, David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983).
2. See my 'Sanskrit Loanwords in Pre-Angkor Khmer'; *Mon-Khmer Studies*, 6 (1977), pp. 151-68, at pp. 160-67.
3. For example, *prasiddhi*, meaning in Old Khmer, 'exclusive right' and in Modern Khmer 'to cause to be successful'; or *punya*, in Old Khmer 'foundation,' 'work of merit,' in Modern Khmer 'festival,' 'good.'
4. See, e.g., K. 557, Est 33-34. References to pre-Angkor and Angkor inscriptions are given as in George Coedès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, 8 vols. (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1937-66).
5. In fact this corpus of inscriptions does include one long poem, No. 38.
6. These identifications are noted in S. Lewitz (1970-73)/S. Pou (1974-75), "Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor" [henceforth *IMA*], *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* [henceforth *BEFEO*], 57 (1970), pp. 99-126; 58 (1971), pp. 105-23; 59 (1972), pp. 101-21 and 221-49; 60 (1973), pp. 163-203 and 205-42; 61 (1974), pp. 301-37; and 62 (1975), pp. 283-353.
7. The Middle Khmer words cited here are given their correct spelling. In this essay most Khmer vocabulary items are rendered in the Lewitz transliteration system (see S. Lewitz, "Note sur la translittération du cambodgien," *BEFEO*, 55 [1969], pp. 163-69). Only in cases where the modern pronunciation is of greater interest than the spelling is my own transcription employed (see my *Introduction to Cambodian* [London: Oxford University Press, 1968]).
8. See *IMA* 6.
9. *IMA* 4 and 17.
10. S. Pou, *Études sur le Rāmakerti (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1977), pp. 58-60, takes a different view, including the *Lpoek Ankar Vatt* in the epic category.
11. Many similes, some of them long and involved, were formed in imitation of Sanskrit originals. The shorter ones were often repeated by later poets: e.g., the vast army of the king was typically compared with the sea, *mahā sāgar*; the anger of heroes was compared with era-ending fire.
12. Kings and princes were described as "serene" even when some disaster threatened or when some great sorrow afflicted them. Such official serenity was regarded as befitting their station in life; note the typically serene expression of the royal heroes depicted in Angkorean sculptures, leather shadow-play puppets, dance theatre masks and painted illustrations.
13. The vocabulary illustrated under (d) was already in everyday use by those people who had occasion to address or to speak about royalty, since it formed part of the Royal Vocabulary. In all later literature writers had to use this Vocabulary (with its very lengthy terms) when royalty was referred to, even if they had no wish to use the High Language in general. This political necessity tended to give the (sometimes incorrect) impression that an elevated style was generally intended.
14. See Pou, *Études*, pp. 53-58, for a discussion of the dating of this work.
15. The admiration for the Thai felt by the Khmer was reciprocated. Everyday Khmer words regularly occurred in contemporary Thai poetry.
16. Sañkh Silp Jāy is a personal name of the Buddha in a previous existence. The name literally means 'victorious, supernatural shell,' and refers to the fact that this Buddha was born with a shell enclosing his body.
17. *Kambujasuriyā* (1930), no. 1, p. 12.
18. Nou Hach, *Mālā Tuoñ Citt* [A Garland for the Heart] (Phnom Penh: Samāgam anak nibandh Khmaer, Association des écrivains Khmers, 1952), p. 140.
19. Sam Thang, *Vākya-parivatt(n) khmaer-pārāmñh*. *Lexique khmer-français* (Phnom Penh: Kim Ky, 1962), preface.
20. All the issues of 1961 and 1962 contained short lists.
21. Occasionally a French word was still retained; for example, the 'translation' for *chancelier* was /səŋsv:lite:(r)/.
22. *Kambujasuriyā* (1960), pp. 91-97; 221-26.
23. *Kambujasuriyā* (1960), pp. 331-35; 461-67; 580-88; 710-16; 829-34; 943-51; 1069-75.
24. *Bhāb* had occurred previously as a noun

meaning 'condition', 'state,' e.g., *bhāb satv* (the condition of being an animal), but it had not been used to form compounds.

25. *Kambujasuriyā* (1956), p. 828. Alternatively, a reduplicative phrase might be used combining a French-derived word and its Khmer quasi-synonym, e.g., *jā arp̄itr ja majjhatakar* (as arbiter), in Nou Hach, *Mālā*, p.183.

26. Nonetheless, some French loans for the vocabulary of politics remained acceptable, such as *plok* (*bloc*) and /plɔŋ/ (*plan*).

27. An essay of mine on this subject is due to appear shortly in a volume of paper for Eugenie Henderson.

28. For example, the typically female conversation among the *kinnari* is they vie with each other for the attention of the Bodhisattva, in *Rīoēn Saṅkh Silp Jāy*, *Historie de Saing Selchey* (Phnom Penh: Institut Bouddhique, 1962), pp. 106-9.

29. Kuy Lot, *Rīoēn Brāh Pad Bañā Yāt* [King Ponhea Yat] (Phnom Penh, Kuy Lot, 1966), p. 54.

30. It is curious that the *Kambujasuriyā* refer only to the use of these new words in official documents and newspapers.

31. Tan Seng Ky, *Rīoēn Vira:jan khmaer* [A Tale of Khmer Heroes] (Phnom Penh: Bou Phally, 1966), p. 84.

32. Nou Hach, *Mālā*, p. 121.

33. See Saveros Pou and Philip N. Jenner, 'Some Chinese Loanwords in Khmer,' *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 9: 1 (1973), pp.1-90.

34. For example, the novel *Sam Kok* was serialized in translation in *Kambujasuriyā* between the years 1946 and 1955, and also in the newspaper *Mātubhūmi* during 1962.