SANSKRIT LOANWORDS IN PRE-ANGKOR KHMER

0. Introduction.

The first Khmer texts, inscriptions of the 7th and 8th centuries A.D., gave practical information about religious foundations while Sanskrit, at that time regarded by the Khmers as the language of literature proper, was used for composing the panegyrics of gods and kings. Already at this stage the Khmer language had been exposed for several centuries to Indian influence and contained many Sanskrit loanwords. Borrowing had taken place of necessity in connection with the new religions, political and legal ideas, and the artefacts associated with them. Was it possible, however, that the prestige attached to the incoming culture may have led to more borrowing than was necessary? Did familiarity with the Indian culture and language eventually cause further unconscious imitation?

It is proposed here to examine the Sanskrit vocabulary which is evidenced in pre-Angkor Khmer (PA) texts, looking at the kind of loanword which was borrowed from a semantic viewpoint; the reasons for borrowing; and the extent to which Khmerisation of the form or of the syntactical usage of the word took place.


The Sanskrit words found in PA are here discussed in six paragraphs based roughly on grammatical categories, as follows:

1. Vocabulary connected with stating the date and issuing warnings to marauders. This occurred in semi-continuous phrases or sentences.

2. Personal names (of gods and men), other proper names (of localities, hells, festivals), and titles (of gods and men).

3. Concrete nouns (words referring to persons carrying out particular rôles and duties; names of objects and substances).

4. Abstract nouns. This section is interpreted widely to include some Sanskrit participles used as nouns and to comprise collective nouns, a numeral, terms of measurement, and words relating to points of the compass.

5. Verbs, adjectives, and participles.

6. Words of other categories.

1.1. The Date: Warnings to Marauders.

The date was always given almost completely in Sanskrit. The piece did, however, always include whichever was appropriate of two Khmer words, /ket/ 'to wax' or /roc/ 'to wane'. The following example comes at the beginning of the inscription K.557: /traitrīcottarapāṇaça çata çaka parigraha trayodaçi ket māgha puṣyanaksatra tulalagna/ '533 çaka, 13th
day of the waxing moon of Māgha, in the lunar mansion of Puṣya, the balance being at the horizon'.

Warnings of punishment to marauders were sometimes given in the form of almost continuous Sanskrit phrases. At the end of K.127 we read: /ge tae vipya gi saptapitā saptamātā pañcamahārauc[ra]vanarakāh patanti/ 'those who do any damage will, with seven generations of male and female ancestors, fall into the hell, Raurava, of the five great [crimes]'. Where warnings are given almost entirely in Khmer the details of damage are more lively, mentioning persons stealing boats, making their homes on the grotto or demanding things for themselves, while their punishment, expressed as /ge danā/ 'they will be punished', sounds imminent rather than in eternity.

1.2. Proper Names and Titles.

The names of the gods, together with most of the names of places and of dignitaries, may be found listed in an index by Monsieur Cœdès (1966: 19-71). The names of the gods are mostly Sanskrit. Such Khmer names as occur—"the Old One," "the Young One," or "the Lord of the district"—may well be more familiar substitutes for the real names of the gods. Names of places, especially of the smaller places, on the other hand, are more often Khmer than Sanskrit. There is a difference in the kind of name. The Khmer names very often reflect a feature of the environment—a plant or animal frequently seen there, for example. The Sanskrit place names, although they have a realistic final component such as /vana/ 'forest', /grāma/ 'village', tend to have imaginative first elements, e.g. /purandara pura/ 'city of the destroyer of strongholds', etc. Some hybrid names occur, e.g. /travān nāga/ 'reservoir of snakes/nāgas'.

Cœdès's list does not include the names of the humbler people, the workers in the religious foundations. These involve over 450 Sanskrit names. As with place names, a contrast is to be found between the Khmer and Sanskrit names of these serving personnel. The Khmer names are very often names of plants, animals or objects, or words descriptive of mental or physical characteristics. The Sanskrit names express ideas. They may be of a religious nature: /cṛddhā/ 'Believing', /kṛṣṇadatta/ 'Given to Krishna'; or elevated: /ākāśadeva/ 'Sky-god', /ādityavāmi/ 'Sun-lord'; or attractive: /kalyāna/ 'Beautiful', /mañjari 'Cluser of blossoms'; or ordinal numerals like the English Septimus, etc.: /daṃci/ 'Tenth'; or just apt (one supposes): /samarasena/ 'Soldier of the battle-field' (name of a dancer), /gandharvagīta/ 'Song of musician' (name of a musician).

Names of hells are: /taptaka, mahāraura, atiraurava, avīci, aśīkumka, and /vaitaraṇī/. Two names of festivals occur: /pańcotsava/ and /mahānavami/. 'Titles, that is by definition words followed by personal names in close junction, include /bhagavat/ 'Blessed', /svāmī/ 'Master', and /ācāryya/ 'Teacher'.

1.3. Concrete Nouns.

Loanwords which are names of agents are connected with religious or, to
a less extent, political rôles and duties. They include, for example, /kulapati/ 'superior', /purohita/ 'chaplain', /prabhu/ 'superintendent', /yajamāna/ 'one who carries out an offering', /guru/ 'preceptor', /vādyā/ 'musician', /mahānāsa/ 'cook', /kārmāntika/ 'worker', /dāsa/ 'slave', and /grāmapāla/ 'guardian of the village'.

Names of objects include many names of appurtenances of the gods such as /prthivi/ 'the world (globe held by a statue of Vishnu)', /makuṭa/ 'headdress', /kaṭaka/ 'bracelet', /koça/ 'box' and of utensils connected with ritual such as /kalaçca/ 'pitcher' and /cāñkha/ 'conch'. They also include names of constructions which are religious: /aṅgana/ 'court', /āçrāma/ 'hermitage', /āçraya/ 'refuge', /kuṭi, 'cell', and secular: /mandira/ 'mansion' and /cāla/ 'hall'.

Names referring to territorial features include /kṣetrārāma/ 'fields and gardens', /pramāna/ 'territory', and /parimaṇḍala/ 'surroundings'.

Products with a religious significance were known by their Sanskrit names: /dṛṇapa/ 'joss-stick', /caru/ 'oblation', /dugdhi/ 'milk', and /ājya/ 'ghee'.

Substances for which the Sanskrit word is used include /kambala/ 'wool cloth', /karpāsa/ 'cotton', and /cūnti/ 'ginger'.

1.4. *Abstract and Collective Nouns.*

This section comprises over fifty words, most of which may be fitted roughly into one of five semantic categories, being associated with religion, law, numeration, measurement or the points of the compass.

Among those connected with religion are /saṭra/ 'offering', /sandhyā/ 'thrice-daily prayers', /svarga/ 'heaven', and /ākra/ 'offering of revenue to the god'.

Examples of loans connected with the law are /ucita/ 'tax', /daṇḍya/ 'punishment', /anyāya/ 'injustice', /ājāna/ 'edict', and /prasiddhi/ 'exclusive right'.

Sanskrit numerals were not strictly borrowed. They occur in the announcements of the date in a Sanskritic context. Ordinal numbers occur as personal names; isolated instances of /cātur/ and /koṭi/ are found as names. Only one Sanskrit numeral, /cāta/, occurs in Khmer grammatical contexts, however. The word /piṇḍa/ 'total' and /sarvapipiṇḍa/ 'final total', it may be mentioned here, occur frequently.

Certain terms of measurement are found mixed in with Khmer terms: /prastha/ (weight and capacity measurement), /bhāra/ (weight measurement), and /tula/ (weight measurement).

The Sanskrit terms for the points of the compass occur, together with /aśtādiça/ 'the eight directions'.

1.5. *Verbs, Adjectives, and Participles.*

Unlike companions though these words are when viewed from the Sanskrit angle, in Khmer usage the majority of them merge into one broad verbal category, composed of operative and adjectival verbs. The total number of loanwords from all categories is only about two dozen. Two
examples of each Sanskrit category are given here:

/cracur/ < /cur/ v. ‘steal’;
/lope/ < /lup/ v. ‘damage’.

/supratiṣṭha/ adj. ‘standing firm’;
/sāmanta/ adj. ‘neighbouring’

/kalpita/ < /klpt/ pp. ‘fixed’;
/nirasta/ pp. ‘driven away’.

1.6. Words of Other Categories.

It should be mentioned here that words such as /yate/, yāvat, tāvat/, which occur only in connected pieces of Sanskrit as described in 1.1, are not held to be loanwords. However, a few adverbs occur in Khmer syntax: /pratidina/ < /pratidinam/ ‘daily’, /tris/ ‘thrice’, /antyanti/ ‘lastly’, /uk/ < /u/ ‘also’,
/savāla/ ‘including the children’, and /savālavṛddhi/ ‘including old people and children’. The prefix /sam/ occurs frequently.

2. Reasons for Borrowing.

2.1. So many PA inscriptions in Khmer begin with the date in Sanskrit and end with warnings in Sanskrit that one might think that borrowing of these passages was stylistic, inspired by the wish to have a good beginning and ending. The two pieces, dates and warnings, must here be considered separately.

The use of Sanskrit for warnings may be shown to be by choice and therefore to be for the sake of style, since the Khmer language was used for warnings on many inscriptions. Possibly there was no general Khmer word for to punish, since /danda/ was borrowed for the ending of the warnings in Khmer. A series of verbs indicating the exact types of punishment would have been natural in Khmer, one would guess. However, the Khmer language was in general entirely adequate for the purpose and had the advantage of being understood by more of the would-be marauders.

For the date, on the other hand, the Khmers were using Sanskrit of necessity. They had adopted the Great Era and, with it, the names of the months and the words /nakṣatra/ and /çaka/. Numerals would have been supplied by Khmer but this would have been clumsy. No individual numeral, 100, would have been available since the Khmer system offered only the numerals 1–5, 10, 20, 40 and 400. 100 would probably have been expressed as (5 x 20). Apart from /ket/ ‘to wax’ and /roc/ ‘to wane’, PA words connected with the date are /chnam/ ‘year’ and /khe/ ‘month’ (the latter occurring as a name). Perhaps the Khmers did calculate the date by counting the days of the waxing and waning moon in pre-Indian times? The practice of mixing Khmer and Sanskrit in writing the date has continued in the same way until this century.

2.2. The strong tendency of the Khmers to use borrowed words for the