SOME FEATURES OF MODERN KHMER LITERARY STYLE

The literary or formal style under review here is that of modern prose, particularly that to be found in journals, speeches and novels. Interest in this aspect of the Khmer language was stimulated by the realization that certain assumptions are made about it without any attempt at justification. For example, one feels, especially when translating, that it is an unnecessarily verbose style, containing far more words than can be represented in the translation. Is this really so, or is it a false impression due to language differences? One also tends to say, without any specific parallels in mind, that modern Khmer journalese is clearly imitative of its French equivalent. This paper attempts to summarize the various linguistic differences between the consciously formal modern style and the spoken, or informal. Material has been collected for the purpose from articles (post-1930) on literature and religion, particularly those in the journal Kambujasuriyā, from newspapers (1950-72) and from novels (1938-71). I am very much aware that there may be many constructions, associated with style, which have been missed and I present this analysis as a precursor of others.

The increase in the output of prose writing as compared with poetry in the last few decades, during which, for example, both the novel and the printed newspaper in Khmer have developed from scratch, has caused prose writing to be held in higher esteem that it traditionally was in Cambodia. Authors of novels and writers of articles were trying consciously to raise the standard of prose style in the 1950s and 1960s in response to the general wave of nationalistic feeling. Interesting changes in style which thus took place in post-war Cambodia, especially since independence in 1953, may be observed by comparison with the factual and simple narratives of the Chronicles, composed in the nineteenth century, or of the first written versions of folktales, or of the esteemed early twentieth century writer Suttantaprijā In. The analysis of these developments might be presented in many different ways. I have decided to arrange the various points in four sections which suggest my own idea of their possible origin. These are:

1. Features which seem to be present in order to clarify long, involved sentences;
2. A feature which suggests conscious or unconscious imitation of Thai;
3. Features which suggest conscious or unconscious imitation of French;
4. Features which seem to reflect the desire to embellish, using the traditional devices of Khmer literature.

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1. Features which seem to be present in order to clarify long, involved sentences.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when upwards of 3000 new technical terms based on Sanskrit and Pāli were invented so as to avoid using French loanwords any longer, the introduction of this unfamiliar vocabulary added to the need to explain some old loans to a general reading public and had some effects on the style of written Khmer:

(i) In the early years of the use of the new vocabulary it was common practice to place two words, one Khmer, one Indian, side by side. Thus /smo:m yi:ɔːcɔk/² (Khm. + Skt.) ‘beggar’, /svksa: so:t riən/ (Skt. + Khm.) ‘education’, /prətʰ-h-ci:ɔt mi:ətɔfʊːm/ (old + new borrowing) ‘one’s native country’, all occur in the newspapers of the 1950s.

(ii) The unwieldy sentences produced by use of the new words in complex clauses led to the excessive use of the literary particles /nɔːy/ and /nɛy/ which are used only with restraint in earlier prose writing such as that of the Chronicles, the folk-tales, or the writing of Suttantapīrā In.

/nɔːy/ (spelt nū). In Khmer, the object, when it is expressed, normally follows the verb immediately, e.g. /mɔ:l kɔn/ ‘see a film’. In an informal or colloquial style, no particle connects the object to the verb. The use of /nɔːy/ as an indicator that the object of the verb follows is a literary device which is useful when, as in journalese especially, several phrases occur between the verb and its object and it is helpful to know that the next word, or words, will be the object, e.g.

/coh phsa:y pi: lɔ:k knɔŋ sa: rɔːdɔmιːːn nɛk-ci:ɔt-niyum publish, print two times in newspaper nationalist

/nɔːy ruŋŋ/ (particle) story

‘twice printed the story in the Nationalist newspaper’.

Once established in modern literary usage, however, /nɔːy/ began to be used when there was no need for it because the object followed the verb immediately:

/trɔm-trɔ rɔːŋ nɔːy /ɔmpɔ:hɔm-ni:/
endure undergo (particle) matter pillage

‘put up with the pillaging’.

/nɛy/. In the colloquial, or informal, language, two nouns occurring in close junction may represent an object and its possessor, e.g. /pʰtɛə viːɔ/ ‘their house’. A more elaborate way, especially useful if attributes of the first noun follow it before the occurrence of the possessor-noun, is found both in colloquial speech and in the literary language: /pʰtɛə thɔm rɔbɔh viːɔ/
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(house big possession they) 'their big house'. In a literary modern sentence, however, the role of /raboh/ is played by the particle /nèy/ 'of', e.g.

/łö:k ṭakkèatè:səphiba:l nèy pratè:h ṭo:stra:lil:
governor general of country Australia

'the Governor-General of Australia'

It may be pointed out that, in the Chronicles, many similarly long instances of possession and possessor are expressed without /nèy/ by simple juxtaposition, and that /nèy/, like /nỳu/, came to be used between short familiar words in modern writing too.

(iii) Among the seemingly unnecessary words which help to give the verbose impression to modern literature are many sentence-final nuclei which corroborate a word, often a particle, which has occurred earlier in the sentence. Examples are in this case given (see next page) without full sentences, for the most part, since the point seems clear from the meanings given and they are divided according to the grammatical functions of the two elements.

The practice illustrated in these examples, which occurs freely in the colloquial language as well as the written, seems to have become a characteristic feature of journalese, where it has a clarifying role, not so much because the meaning is reaffirmed as because the sentence-final nucleus, or sometimes several of them together, confirms that the end of a clause has been reached.

2. A feature which suggests conscious or unconscious imitation of Thai

In colloquial speech, the only numeral coefficients which have to be used are those of which the meaning is a term of measurement, e.g. /ksi:lo:/ in the phrase /skò: pi: ki:lo/ 'two kilos of sugar'. In a formal or literary context, however, there is a tendency to use unnecessary numeral coefficients. Thus, for example, the numeral coefficient for human beings /nèak/ (e.g. /manūh pi: nèak/ 'two men'), which has been in evidence since the seventh century, is used more frequently in literature; the general word for 'item', /prakə:/ is found (e.g. /haet pi: prakə:/ 'two reasons'), and various coefficients indicating shapes (e.g. /dom/ 'lump'; /səsay/ 'strand'; /daəm/ 'long thin thing') occur. In addition to the increased use of numeral coefficients in connection with counting, however, there is also a different construction which occurs in modern literature, involving the use of numeral coefficients when counting is not taking place, e.g.

/ceŋčian vùnə nih/ (ring circle this) 'this ring'
/prəah ri:ɕi:ə ʔəŋ nih/ (revered king body this) 'this king'

In such constructions, reminiscent of Thai, the numeral coefficients, here /vùnə/ and /ʔəŋ/, are behaving as true classifiers.
(a) *Meaning of pre-verbal particle* (pre-v.p.) *corroborated by sentence final element:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pre-v.p.</th>
<th>final particle</th>
<th>translation</th>
<th>extra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nyr-ntae</td>
<td>prakaek</td>
<td>nyr-laẹy (still)</td>
<td>'still'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(still)</td>
<td></td>
<td>'is still arguing about (it)'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pum-tən</td>
<td>ralət</td>
<td>nyr-laẹy (still)</td>
<td>'still'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not yet)</td>
<td></td>
<td>'is not yet extinguished'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re-v.p.</td>
<td>adverbial particle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sot-tae</td>
<td>thvːː tiːhiːːn</td>
<td>tẹn-ʔoh (all)</td>
<td>'all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(all without</td>
<td></td>
<td>'all without exception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do soldier</td>
<td></td>
<td>became soldiers'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exception</td>
<td></td>
<td>'all'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>srp-tae</td>
<td>dəl</td>
<td>phliːm (immediately)</td>
<td>'immediately'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(suddenly)</td>
<td></td>
<td>'suddenly they were there'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kʊŋ prəteh</td>
<td>mʊŋ səmbok vːa</td>
<td>pum khaːn (not miss)</td>
<td>'without fail'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(certain meet)</td>
<td>with nest they</td>
<td>'shall be sure to come across one of their nests'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) *Meaning of general particle* (gen.p.) *corroborated by a final particle* (f.p.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gen.p.</th>
<th>f.p.</th>
<th>translation</th>
<th>extra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nyr səl</td>
<td>tae buːn</td>
<td>ponnoh (just so)</td>
<td>'just so'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(left over)</td>
<td>only four</td>
<td>'there were only four left'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(c) **Meaning of pre-nominal particle (pre-n.p.) corroborated by adverbial particle (adv.p.):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pre-n.p.</th>
<th>adv. p.</th>
<th>translation</th>
<th>extra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṭh pù:sk</td>
<td>tèn-ṭh</td>
<td>'the whole group'</td>
<td>'all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(all group)</td>
<td>all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>krùp rù:p</td>
<td>tèn-ṭh</td>
<td>'all of them'</td>
<td>'all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(complete person)</td>
<td>all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) **Meaning of post-nominal particle (post-n.p.) corroborated by adverbial particle:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>post-n.p.</th>
<th>adv.p.</th>
<th>translation</th>
<th>extra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pùm tū:təl</td>
<td>dəmnya</td>
<td>ṭy  bontec-bontə:c  laəy</td>
<td>at all 'did not receive any news at all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not receive news)</td>
<td>any</td>
<td>slightest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e) **Meaning of main verb corroborated by final particle or verb:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>f.p. or verb</th>
<th>translation</th>
<th>extra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kaan</td>
<td>tū μak</td>
<td>'will increase'</td>
<td>'further'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(increase)</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>further)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(f) **Meaning of attributive verb corroborated by an adverb:**

| yò:k khaet .......ba:n krùp tèn-ṭh mò:k vën | 'managed to recover all the provinces' | 'all' |
| (take province manage complete all come back) | | |

(g) **Plurality of a reduplicative compound corroborated by sentence final nucleus:**

| rabōh thom-thom | ci:a craən | 'many large objects' | 'in numbers' |
| (thing big and numerous in numbers) | | | |
3. Features which suggest conscious or unconscious imitation of French

Slight changes in grammatical usage which seem to be due to French influence are illustrated under four heads: (i) the use of abstract nouns in preference to verbs; (ii) the attempt to express some nuances contained in the meanings of various verbal forms in French; (iii) changes of Cambodian word-order in imitation of the French. Under (iv), the practice of word-for-word translation of French turns of phrase is illustrated.

(i) The use of abstract nouns in preference to verbs

The Khmer natural idiom uses a verb rather than a noun whenever possible. When an abstract noun is essential Khmer has its own ways, based on verbs, of supplying the need. Nouns formed by infixation of the verb are still in use, e.g. /kɔmhoː/ ‘a wrong’ < /khoh/ ‘to be wrong’. Sometimes an abstract noun is produced by juxtaposing two verbs of opposite meaning, e.g. /tɔt्ːal koh-troːːv/ (lit. ‘to accept wrong-right’) ‘to take responsibility for’. Another means is to form a noun by placing the word /kaː/ ‘action’ or /ɔmpɪː/ ‘activity’ or /sekdɔːy/ ‘matter’ before a verb or attributive verb, e.g. /kaː pɔŋːriːk/ (lit. ‘matter open up’) ‘development’. However, many abstract nouns were nevertheless borrowed from French and have now been carefully replaced and supplemented by new Indian borrowings. Also of importance is the position of an abstract noun in a natural Khmer sentence. It seems that when abstract nouns are used in Khmer, they do not usually occur, except in philosophical discourse, as the subject of the sentence. Sentences in modern writing in which new nouns occur often seem very un-Cambodian and, especially if nouns do occur as sentence subjects, suggest French influence to me, e.g.

/kūmnɔt nʌŋ sakamɔphiːɔp nɪŋ pūm mɪːn prɔsɐtʰiphɪːɔp
(idea and action these not have effectiveness
mʊːɔy rɔːy phiːak rɔːy/
on hundred part hundred)

‘These ideas and activities were not one hundred percent effective’.

/sarəpʰiːɔp sʁɔk yɔːŋ cɪːɔ sarəphiːɔpsʁɔk viːɔl tʊmniːɔp/
(truth country we is truth country plain low)

‘The essential nature of our country is that of a low plain’ /‘Our country is essentially a low-lying plain’,

(ii) The attempt to express some ‘nuances’ contained in the meanings of various verbal forms of French

(a) daʊɔː / This word may occur as a clause-marker (conjunction) and, if so, the unexpressed subject of the clause is always the same as that of the main clause. In everyday usage it occurs with the meaning ‘through the fact
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(that); because (of). In novels, /daoy/ has been observed in occurrences such as these but also in contexts where it seems to indicate that the action of the verb in the clause it introduces takes place simultaneously with the action of the main verb and where no cause is given, e.g.

/kraok chôː khôːt/ cep chnôːːy, daoy somdæn
(get-up stand move off afar, (through) show
prâːkh-kâːːy-vîkâː səp-khptːm
royal-gesture despise)

‘He stood up and moved away some distance, making a gesture of contempt.’

A native Khmer way of expressing simultaneous action which might have been used is to place the word /domnaːː/ after each of the two verbs. In the example, however, the Khmer sentence seems to imitate the ability of French to bring the present participle into play (‘faisant’ or ‘en faisant’).

(b) /kompûː̊/ occurs as a pre-verbal particle meaning ‘in the middle of verb-ing’ and precedes a main verb of action in normal everyday usage. In novels it has been found in occurrences where it seems to be added in as an extra word, e.g.

/prêtâːn pnhːːk nûː̊ sat-chlöːːh mûːːy kompûː̊ chôː sîː smau/
(meet eyes with mouse-deer in-the-middle-of standing eat grass)

‘Their eyes lit upon a mouse-deer standing grazing.’

Here /kompûː̊/ occurs unusually before a verb used attributively in close junction with a noun, where the same phrase without /kompûː̊/ would be normal in Khmer and where French might have a present participle or a relative clause with imperfect tense.

(c) Khmer sentences, spoken or written, tend to depend as far as possible on context and meaning to indicate relative time, and can proceed with a minimum use of words such as /baːn/ (past), /nûː̊/ (future) and /hâːy/ (completion). Time relationships between two clauses may not need any clause marker, such as /kraoy-daːl/ ‘after’, if any of the other indicators is present. It seems probable that it was familiarity with the precision of the various tenses in French which caused a much fuller use of indications of relative time in recent written Khmer, e.g.

/kraoy-daːl baːn sdaːp sekkdvː thlæn cōp hâːy, prêːk-sōːh kôː baːn somdæn sekkdvː rîːk riːːy/
(after have listened-to matter express through-to-end already monks then have shown matter joyful)

‘After they have listened through to the end of the address, the monks expressed their delight...’

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Since the whole context of this sentence was already known to be past, /ba:n/, which occurs in both clauses, was not needed at all. In speech /haoy/ at the end of the first clause would be enough to indicate the relative time of the actions of the two clauses. The French ‘après avoir écouté...’ seems possible as a model for this.

(iii) Changes of Cambodian word-order in imitation of the French

In spoken, or simply written Khmer, adverbs, adverbial phrases, attributive verbs modifying a main verb, and post-verbs completing the meaning of a main verb all characteristically follow the main verb and its object and occur in clause or sentence final position. In newspaper style, however, changes of word-order such as the following may take place made possible by use of the particle /nťu/ discussed in section 1 (ii).

/cap-phdaom ci:o yuː chnam mɔːk haɔy nťu nɛayɔːbɑːy tůŋk/
(establish being long years by now (particle) policy water)

‘put the water policy into operation many years ago’

This seems to me to reflect French ‘depuis de longues années’ placed between verb and object.

The following example comes from an article in Kambujasuriyā (1966):

/sonisvt bae pnh phdl ʔaoy nťu laθphol dɔː somkhan/
‘A conference of this kind produces important results’
(lit. ‘produces for [particle] result’).

Normally ʔaoy/ ‘to give; for’ would come after the object; it suggests ‘for (us, people, the participants, one)’. Perhaps the aim of the un-Khmer-like position of ʔaoy/ is to avoid a construction which is so unlike French?

(iv.) Word-for-word translation of French turns of phrase

(a) The Khmer language has its own metaphoric vocabulary, some of which uses the same imagery as French or English, for example, in associating the ideas of heat or fire with anger. In the following examples, from newspapers, however, the metaphors of French idiom are used rather than those which the Khmer language offers:

/rûmcūːl harûtēy yaːŋ criːl-crû/ (agitated royal-feelings manner deep) ‘deeply disturbed’. Here Khmer idiom would have /khan/ ‘strong’ instead of ‘deep’.

/knoŋ boriyaːkɑːh rîːk-riːːy (in atmosphere joyful) ‘in a happy atmosphere’. This use of the new Khmer loanword /bɔriyaːkɑːh/ metaphorically is entirely due to French.
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(b) Many instances may be found in newspapers of direct translation of the complete French phrase:

/kûː: thaː/ (that-is to-say) 'c’est à dire'. /kûːr:/ alone rather than /kûːr: thaː/ would seem more natural judging from older Khmer prose.

/miːn kaː pisaoʈ/ (have matter experiment) 'avoir l’expérience'. Use of the simple verb /pisaoʈ/ rather than the expression would seem more idiomatic in Khmer.

/baːʔaːkʰə həc ?əoɣ/ (if opportunity pass-across for) 'si l’occasion se présente'. /həc/ normally has an object following it, even in a metaphorical use such as in the Khmer phrase /həc khluːʔən ?əoɣ praə/ (pass-across self so-that use-services-of) ‘offer one’s services’.

/nipːən daɔɡ/ (compose through) ‘écrit par’. This phrase, seeming to be a translation from French, now appears on the title page of books instead of the older Cambodian format: Title of work: Author’s name: /ɾiɔːprɪːŋ/.

/kompûŋ stʰyt nɨu/ (in-the-middle-of be-stationed remain) ‘se trouve actuellement’. /kompûŋ/, which occurs characteristically in Khmer before verbs of action rather than, as here, before a stative verb, seems unnecessary in any case in connotation with both /stʰyt/ and /nɨu/, either of which means ‘be situated’. I suspect /kompûŋ/ is there because of familiarity with French ‘actuellement’.

/miːn karonvyaʔkec nɨu bɔmpən (have duty will fulfil) ‘avoir un devoir à remplir’. The Khmer form would be /tɾɔːv bɔmpən karonvyaʔkec/ ‘must fulfil a duty’.

4. Features which seem to reflect the desire to embellish, using the traditional devices of Khmer literature.

These features are discussed under three heads: (i) elevation of style; (ii) reduplication and repetition of ideas; and (iii) expansion and variation.

(i) Elevation of style

Several features which have been discussed in preceding sections help to elevate the style; for example, the Thai-inspired use of numeral coefficients mentioned in section 2. Here, however, two specific means are considered: the choice of vocabulary and the use of particles preceding attributive verbs.

(a) Four waves of loanwords from Sanskrit and/or Pāli have come into the language to fill gaps: legal, religious, and political terms in the pre-Angkor and Angkor periods; Pāli Buddhist terms, chiefly from the eleventh century onwards; the bulk of the royal vocabulary from sometime
after the end of the Angkor period onwards; and the new vocabulary
during the last few decades. The 'high' language of poetry has been drawn
from the first three of these categories. Terms from all four kinds of
borrowing are characteristically to be found in modern prose, causing the
style to differ profoundly from that of the spoken language.?

(b) /dx:/ In Khmer an attributive verb follows immediately the noun it
modifies, in the normal structure of colloquial and informal language; e.g.
/mìnːən pʰtʰən thom/ ‘had a big house’. In the literary language, however,
/dx:/ has long had the role of preceding an attributive verb and attaching it
to the noun. It is still used and has the effect of highlighting the attribute: e.g.

/aːriəŋprətːəh mûːcːy doː trəcah-trəcon (civilised country one particle
shining) ‘a magnificent civilisation’

In newspapers, however, its use is extended so as to attach other categories
of word to the nouns:

/thlaɛŋ tʰɔmːoː kûn doː kray lèːŋ/ (express joy (at) good-deed particle
very very) ‘express (my) great gratitude’

/lathəphɔːl doː ciːɔ tiː kɔːp cvt/ (result particle being focus suit feelings)
‘a satisfactory outcome’

In the first of these examples, an adverb /kray lèːŋ/, and in the second, a
phrase /ciːɔ tiː kɔːp cvt/, are treated in the same way as attributive verbs.
Another extension of the use of /dx:/ in journalese is to allow it to attach
two attributes to the noun:

/tʰɔː kəːl doː yù nûn doː lûmbaːk/ (whole time particle long and particle
difficult) ‘during this long and difficult period’

/dx:/ is not really necessary as a clarifier of the construction even in the
long phrases of the literary language; it is an embellishment used
particularly in descriptive passages in novels or flowery parts of public
speeches.

/yəːŋ/ This word, meaning ‘way’, is in competition with /dx:/, now as a
means to attach attribute to noun, e.g.

/tɔːtːəl paraːcɛɨ yəːŋ tʰaːmah/ ‘suffered a humiliating defeat’

Unlike /dx:/, however, it occurs also when an attributive verb occurs post-
verbally (usually to be translated into English by an adverb), e.g.

/kaː tʰəːn-tvən bʌːn kɔːt miːən ləːŋ yəːŋ kʰlæŋ-klaː/ (matter tense has risen
is-there rising way strong) ‘tension has arisen to an extreme degree’

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Khmer grammar does not require the presence of any particle before such an attributive verb and it would not be present normally in informal and colloquial speech (cf. /kǔːt seckɗy troː/y/ ‘think the latter out correctly’). The particles /nỳː/ and nèː/, discussed in section 1 as having a clarifying role, also, like /doː/ and /yanː/, contribute by their mere presence to the literary flavour of a sentence.8

(ii) Reduplication and repetition of ideas

As is well known, Khmer is a language in which reduplication occurs structurally at the levels of phonology,9 morphology,10 and syntax.11 Repetition of ideas occurs in the formation of compounds.12 Both exact reduplication using phonaesthetic words, sometimes specially created, and repetition of ideas using poetic vocabulary,13 occur as literary devices and have done so since the beginning of Khmer poetic composition.14 The following examples, taken from modern prose, merely illustrate the use of the same devices in modern writing.

(a) Reduplication

/rǔːt-tae chūː khlān laːŋ khlān laːŋ/ (increasingly ill strong up strong up) ‘became more and more seriously ill’
/khlān laːŋ/ could have occurred without reduplication.
/ciː k wūːl ciː k ruːh suːɔ/ (dig tree-stump dig roots ask) ‘make a thorough investigation’
/ciː k wūːl ruːh/ could have occurred without the interpolated reduplication.
/ciː nɛː ciː kæːl/ ‘always’

This use of interpolated reduplication, based on a compound loanword (Pāli: niccakālaj) produces an understandable phrase because both components of the compound are familiar to Khmer readers as separate words. Word-play exercised on Indian loanwords is used as a poetic embellishment.

(b) Repetition of ideas

The examples under this heading are from both novels and newspapers:
/ciː nùːlaːrūːk ñathūːk-ñathūːk/ (being grand splendid) ‘in a very grand manner’
/ciː aː/ usually precedes one attributive verb in this much-usd pattern for forming clause final adverbial phrases with the meaning ‘in a - - manner’

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The whole meaning is in effect said twice in different ways, very much in the poetic tradition, particularly of the nineteenth century.

A certain means of expression, which I have noticed particularly in the written language, and of which I have found instances in Middle Khmer poetry, consists of following up the main verb with a short clause which merely repeats the intention expressed by the verb in another way: e.g.

/prap kê: ... ‘aoy ᵃⁿ/ ‘tell someone ... that he may know’
/sɔː... ‘aoy khỳːŋ/ ‘indicate...for (one) to see’
/bopcêŋ (e.g. tûk cvt klaːhaːn)... ‘aoy kê: khỳːŋ/ ‘show (e.g. courage)...for them’
/bopcêk... ‘aoy kê: ᵃⁿ/ ‘make clear...so that people will know’
/bonhaːŋ... ‘aoy yỳːŋ khỳːŋ chbah/ ‘demonstrate...so that we shall clearly see’
/baːn seckdvy cɔmédia... doːc praːthnaː/ ‘achieve success... as was their wish’
/tỳː: dɔː... doːc pɔːŋ/ ‘arrive...as they desired’

This kind of clause seems to occur, in journalese especially, rather more often than the contexts warrant. However, it may, in some cases, seem more necessary to Khmers than it does in the translation because the clause fills out the meaning of the preceding verb, which, on its own in Khmer, has a limited meaning, being able to convey neither the sense of finiteness nor the ideas of completion or result which one can convey in English or French by use of the past tense.

(iii) Expansion and variation

The simple forms of everyday speech or writing are constantly expanded and varied in the formal, literary style. Some examples are given (see next page).

Traditional poetic forms which parallel these examples are to be found, e.g. /sɔː: ‘utterly’ /pro/soːh/; /nûh nêː ‘that, those’ (pro/nûh/), and ‘hak bvy ruːː ‘as though’ (pro/doːc-ciːːɔː/).

A further kind of expansion takes place in the use of some idioms which have already been formed on a literary pattern and which take part in a large grammatical construction. Two examples are:

/yaːŋ saen khôː khỳːu/ (way 100,000 aggressive) ‘in an extremely aggressive manner’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple form</th>
<th>Expanded or varied form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/mùːɔy tit/ (one further)</td>
<td>/mùːɔy tit saot/ (+ moreover)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/myaŋ tit/ (one way further)</td>
<td>/myaŋ ven tit/ (+ again, now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mùn tae ponnɔh/ (not only like that)</td>
<td>/mùn tae ponnɔh praːm tɛŋ...tit/ (+ join also...further)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/bɔntɛc/ (a little, soon)</td>
<td>/bɔntɔːp piː l nûh bɔntɛc mɔːk/ (next from time that a little coming along)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/knoon pɛːl yʊː kɔnlɔŋ mɔːk nûh (in time long past coming along that)</td>
<td>/knoon ˈadvtkaːl kɔnlɔŋ mɔːk yʊː ˈɔŋvɛːŋ haay nûh/ (in past-time coming-along long long already)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tɛŋ (also)</td>
<td>/prɔːm tɛŋ/ (join also)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/thaem tɛŋ/ (add also)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/khaŋ/ (side)</td>
<td>/phnaek khaŋ (section side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/dɔl (as far as)</td>
<td>/dɔrəp mɔːk dɔl (all the way come as-far-as)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/tae/ (only)</td>
<td>/trvm tae/ (up-to-the point only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/baːn ciːɔ/ (get to be) ... piːpruɔh</td>
<td>/haet-dael...kûː daoy/ (cause which... was through...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simple form</strong></td>
<td><strong>Expanded or varied form</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>/haet nih haay ba:n ci:ə/ (cause this completed get be)</td>
<td>‘This was the reason why’ /daoy ?a:sray haet nih haay ɾi:p miːən/ (though depend-on cause this completed so have)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/coon/ (wish)</td>
<td>‘wish’ /miːən bəmnoːŋ coon/ (have desire wish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/nah/ (very)</td>
<td>‘very’ /pə:k nah/ (too-much very)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/kray ləːŋ/ (very let-go)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/kray pə:k/ (very too-much)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/səh laəy/ (particles)</td>
<td>‘at all’ /ʔaoy təəl-tae səh/ (give so-far-as at all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mùn khaːn (not miss)</td>
<td>‘without fail’ /daoy khaːn mùn baːn/ (through miss not possible)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some features of Modern Khmer literary style

/taŋ-pi: rɔːp satavɔːt (since count centuries) ‘for some centuries’

These are both based on idiomatic phrases which occur in literature. /saen/ ‘100,000’ functions in literature as a particle ‘very’ modifying a following attributive verb, here /khɔː:-khvː/. (Khmer particles with this function would occur after the attributive verb; /saen/ as a numeral would normally occur preceding a numeral coefficient, not a verb). In the phrase /yaːŋ saen khɔː: khvː/ the expansion consists in taking this instance of an established literary idiom and using it in place of the attributive verb which usually, as was shown in 4(i), follows /yaːŋ/. In the second phrase, /rɔːp/ ‘to count’ occurs idiomatically with several words in a slightly formal language style, e.g. /rɔːp rɔː:y/ ‘in hundreds’. Here this idiomatic adverbial form is used after a pre-nominal particle instead of the noun, which is expected in that position (e.g. /taŋ-pi: chnam nûː/ ‘since that year’.)

Some features described in the foregoing sections, particularly the use of particles, of time indicators, and of corroborative nuclei when there is no need for them, seem to confirm that there is a tendency to wordiness in Modern Khmer written style. With regard to the influence of French, examples have shown that, ironically, although loanwords from French have, in principle, been discarded, some aspects of French grammar have been incorporated! In presenting together all the points which I have observed, I may have given the impression that all modern writing of news, articles, speeches and novels is packed with these features. In fact, however, many writers of articles have used a restrained style and many novelists have used a very simple style even in descriptive passages; one for example, is Dik Keam in his novel Broḥ tae kamaen (1967). In any case, much of a novel is concerned with narrative and conversation and, for the presentation of conversation, a good tradition of writing both naturally and interestingly seems to have been built up by Khmer novelists, stemming perhaps from the lively little conversation passages which are found in the verse novels (/satraː:ibaŋ/). In fact, for a thorough assessment of a style one would have to separate the genres of writing which have been treated together here.

Although it has been interesting for me to attempt to analyse recent changes in style, I personally prefer the simple, restrained one. However, perhaps foreigners should confine themselves to factual description and not presume to judge style qualitatively. From a Khmer point of view, as section 4 shows, the long-established literary tradition, which is the tradition of poetry, has encouraged embellishment by the use of long loanwords and of reduplicative and repetitive patterns, all of which produce more words.

NOTES

1. The writing of prose in Khmer was traditionally intended for practical reasons only. Literature for artistic purposes was always composed as poetry; at first, from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, in Sanskrit.
2. My source for this has been a photographed manuscript of the Chronicles in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies. Some historical writing is easily available in print, however, in Huffman (1977: 38-78).

3. Reproduced in print in the early volumes of the *Prajam rlee hreun khmaer*.

4. The transcription used here was based on Professor Henderson’s pioneering analysis of Khmer pronunciation (Henderson 1952).

5. Terms for grammatical categories are as given in Jacob (1968).

6. This is not to say that French loans for which new vocabulary was invented went out of use completely. They are still heard.

7. Many Indian loans are so completely naturalized that their presence in the colloquial language passes unnoticed, e.g. /bon/ ‘festival’ < *punya* ‘good work’.

8. /nǐyu/, /nèy/ and /dɔː/ were briefly treated in Jacob (1978) together with /riː/ as literary particles. /riː/ does not seem to occur so much in recent writing.

9. That is, in words having reduplicating initial consonants which are no longer, or have never been, analysable as consisting of base and reduplicating prefix, e.g. /bboː/ ‘soup’, /tɔːtɔːl/ ‘receive’.

10. Reduplicative prefixes consist chiefly of single consonants (e.g. the frequentative /k(ə)kaːj/ from /kaːj/ ‘to dig into the earth with hands, paws’) but include some examples of rhotized consonants (e.g. /tr(ə)tıuŋ/ which occurs in /tr(ə)tıuŋ/ ‘graceful from /tıuŋ/ ‘soft, supple’) and of consonants followed by a nasal consonant (e.g. /sa Namespace /nsaːm/ ‘dew’ from /səam/ ‘wet’). Reduplicative compounds are formed by the juxtaposition of alliterative, rhyming, chiming, or repeated word-forms (e.g. /cat-caen/ ‘to organize’ /riː-ay-miːj/ ‘untidily scattered’); /kmeːn-kmeːŋ/ ‘children (in quantity)’; /proh-proh/ ‘the menfolk, the boys’.

11. Reduplication in syntax intensifies meaning, e.g. /крааН лааŋ craaŋ laaŋ/ ‘increasing in quantity’, is more emphatic than /крааН laaŋ/. Reduplication with interpolation also occurs, especially with components of compounds; e.g. /prap kə: prap ‘aen/ ‘tell everybody’, pro /prap kə:- ‘aen/ id. The reduplicated form is more stylish.

12. Frequently a compound with specialized meaning or with abstract meaning has been formed of components, each of which has, when used alone, approximately the same meaning, e.g. /ciːh-viːŋ/ ‘to avoid’ from /ciːh/ ‘to dodge’ and /vion/ ‘to follow a winding course, go around (an object)’.

13. The following are poetic examples /thia: thlaaŋ coː-ča: prap/ (explain converse tell); /kru-ŋ krap ‘aphiviːt vɔːntiː/ (shrink prostrate-oneself salute salute) ‘greet respectfully’.

14. By the nineteenth century this poetic device began to be overdone. See Jacob (1979).

REFERENCES


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