

NOTE ON WORDS FOR *MALE* AND *FEMALE*
IN OLD KHMER AND MODERN KHMER

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The foreigner looking for words for *male* and *female* in modern Khmer soon learns that we have two pairs of such terms: /cmɔɔl/ 'male' and /nii/ 'female', applied to fauna and flora, and /proh/ 'male' and /srey/ 'female', applied to human beings. He also learns, if he is alert, that the first pair is of Mon-Khmer origin while the second is from Sanskrit. So cut-and-dried do things appear at first glance.

However, if this same foreigner, intrigued by such a neat differentiation of terms, probes back to the beginnings of Khmer epigraphy in the 7th century A.D.,¹ he discovers a nomenclature far more complex. Not only does he find other sets of terms for *male* and *female*; he also uncovers new evidence of how close Old Khmer stands to other Mon-Khmer languages.

1. *Male and Female for Fauna and Flora*

At all periods of the language there has been only the pair of terms already cited. Thus in modern Khmer we have

/kɔɔ cmɔɔl/ 'male cattle, bull' : /kɔɔ nii/ 'female cattle, cow'

/pkaa cmɔɔl/ 'male flower' : /pkaa nii/ 'female flower'²

Moving back into Old Khmer we encounter the following in a pre-Angkorian inscription dating from about the 7th century:³

tmur jmol 20-3 *tmur ye* ... [damaged] '23 bulls
and ... cows'

Old Khmer *jmol* and modern Khmer *jhmol* /cmoŋol/ are one
and the same word, and it is striking that it has
survived unchanged both in form and in meaning.

1. In the languages of the Malay Peninsula, according
to Blagden,⁴ we find for *male* the following terms
which are clearly related to our /cmoŋol/:

'male' : /lemol, lemoŋ, lemul, remol, rempl,
lemon, limo, simo, jambul, amul, remien/

'husband' : /remol, lemul, limon, limo, simo/

Blagden also cites Chréai (= Jarai) /tamo/, while
Afont⁵ gives /təno/ for 'male animal'. We also find
am. /kame/ 'husband' and P. /ime/ 'male, man'.

Old Mon has *jmur* / *kmur* meaning 'strong male',
exemplified in such contexts as

bodhisat das ciñ kmur 'the Bodhisatta was a
strong male elephant'⁶

The old form *jmur* has become *jmū* /həmù/ in modern Mon,
where it still means 'to be of great strength'.⁷

2. For *female* we have OK *ye* versus MK *ñī* /ɲii/.
Since alternation between the palatals is common in
non-Khmer, these two forms may be reflexes of the
same proto-Khmer word.

Owing to the fact that my information is far
from complete, I cannot mention any cognate of *ye* or
ɲii/ except *ya-*, a prefix to proper names of women
and common to OK and OM. For instance, K. 24, from
the 6th or 7th century,⁸ is a long list of slaves
and contains quite a few names of females such as

ku yahun̄, ku yavai, ku yalah̄, ku yañau, ku yamen,
ku yasat, ku yamās, ku yacañ, ku yamun,
ku yavañ, ku yavoṃ, ku yakān, ku yaroñ,
ku yamāl ...

and a few others, the stone being rather damaged.

1.3. In addition to the concept of sex we have that of procreation, which is not implied in /cm̥o̥l/ and /ɲii/. In other words, male and female animals can be conceived of as 'procreating creatures'. Thus

/baa k̥o̥/ 'sire cattle, bull' : /m̥e̥ k̥o̥/ 'dam cattle, cow'

/baa/ 'father' and /m̥e̥/ 'mother' go back respectively to OK *vappā* 'father' and *me* or *ame* 'mother', applied to human beings. The form *vappā* shows a most interesting evolution. In the middle of the OK period (9th century) it split into two elements. The syllable *vap*, after serving as a title for men, disappeared by the end of the period (13th century). Meanwhile, cognate terms for 'father' are still to be found in other M.-K. languages; e.g., Mn.G. /baap/, Ma. /baap/, Chr. /vap/, St. /bwp/.

2. Male and Female for Human Beings

The foregoing details, on the whole fairly simple and accessible, presage a complication in the system of sexual distinctions arising out of an interlacing of concepts. Specifically, when we come to a comparative study of vocabularies, it is very difficult to avoid confusing the ideas of (a) human sex as a biological datum, (b) the matrimonial relation between sexes, and (c) procreative function. I omit discussion of the third idea here on the ground that what we have just seen for animals (1.3) can be applied to human beings as well, and shall examine only words for *male* and *female* on the one hand and for *husband* and *wife* on the other.

As we have seen in the introductory comments, MK has a pair of words borrowed from Skt., namely *srī* /srey/ 'female, woman' < Skt. *strī*
prus /proh/ 'male, man' < Skt. *puruṣa*

corresponding to this pair is another deserving of close attention, namely

ptī /pdey/ 'husband' < Skt. *pati*

prabandh /prəpun ~ prəpuən/ 'wife'

This last form is clearly of non-Indic origin. It occurs in a 10th-century inscription, written *prapvan*, which reminds one of Mal. *perempuan* 'woman'.⁹ There is no doubt that the first three--/srey/, /proh/ and /pdey/--are Skt. loans. They occur more than once in the OK inscriptions from the end of the 8th century, toward the dawn of the Angkorian period. In particular, we have the pair *strī puruṣa* 'female and male', which often occur in combination with *-jana* 'group, people' as collective nouns.

2.1. The next question is, what was the practice in pre-Angkorian times? Unfortunately, the language of this period is pretty well confined to the listing of gifts and offerings--whether because of its limited powers of expression or for other reasons we cannot tell. As it happens, however, among the offerings are mentioned hundreds of names of slaves which provide valuable information on our topic.

The first items to come to our attention form a recurring pair in the pre-Angkorian inscriptions: *si male* and *kantai* 'female'. Thus *kñuṃ kantai 2*,¹⁰ literally 'slave - female - 2', means 'two female slaves'.

To refer to *man* / *men* and *woman* / *women* in general requires the building of compounds with the word *anak* 'person' used as a prefix:

anak si 'man, men' : *anak kantai* 'woman, women'

2.2. According to my data, OK *si* has M.P. cognates meaning 'man' or 'male': /ʔonser, ʔnsiil, siil, sir, ʔnsir, ensir, ɲensir, niqsar, kesir, kesiy, kesui,

kesuih, kesey/. The only cognates I can find in the southern Indochinese area are Bi. /cai/ 'husband' and Mn.G. /sae/ 'husband'.

2.3. OK *kantai* appears to be more interesting for two reasons.

In the first place, the texts show that it also means 'wife', as in this 7th-century list¹¹ of slaves offered to a *vihāra*:

vā sir kantai ku yoñ (1.4) 'vā Sir, wife ku Yoñ'

vā pār kantai vā ku sol (1.5) 'vā Par, his wife ku Sol'

vā joñ kantai vā ku mās (1.7) 'vā Joñ, his wife ku Mās', etc.

In the second place, like *si*, *kantai* has M.P. cognates meaning 'female of animals' (/kənaʔ, ikənan/), 'woman' (/knaʔ, kəna, mai kənah/), 'girl' (/knaʔ/), and 'wife' (/kənde, kəndeh, kəneh, knih, kəne, kəniə, kənah, kənou/). In the Indochinese Peninsula we find Bah. /akan, hakan/ 'female, woman' and, further north, Kh. /kənthey/ 'woman'.¹² Also to be noted is the fact that Kh. has /ka-/ as a prefix marking the feminine gender. This enlarges our field of comparison, since Mal. in early times had /ken/ as a woman's title, as does Balinese now. The same could be said of OK as well, inasmuch as *kantai* appears to be a combination of two morphs, *kan-*, known as a prefix to proper names of women,¹³ and *tai*, used as a title for women all through Old Khmer down to the end of Angkor.

2.4. While *kantai* persists throughout the Old Khmer period, the word *si* tends to disappear around the 9th century. Along with the waxing power and glory of Angkor, the language becomes more sophisticated and, among other innovations, we have the introduction of

class distinctions. In other words, social discrimination is reflected in the language by means of specific lexical items used for and by different classes of society. Thus while the upper class enjoys the privilege of using Skt. *puruṣa* 'male, man', the lower class must be content to employ in the same sense the word *ghoda*, probably of native origin, in lieu of *si*. Actually *ghoda* had already been in use during the pre-Angkorian period, though its occurrence is very rare. I can only surmise that it belonged to a dialect other than that to which *si* belonged and that, as a result of normal dialect competition, it managed to supplant *si* from the language as a whole until it was itself replaced by Skt. *puruṣa* after the close of the Angkorian period.

The Angkorian term *ghoda* yields its first syllable, *gho*, as a title for men. As far as I know, it has no cognates in any Austroasiatic language.

5. No less interesting than those we have just examined are a few other terms which are out of correlation.

In OK we find the form *taṃrus* as a male personal name. This latter fact is of little importance in itself, as we know that personal names in Khmer are mostly taken from the common vocabulary. *Taṃrus* is clearly a derivative of the same **trus* which yields K *tros* /traoh/, meaning 'a strong male' and applied mainly to monkeys and buffaloes. Some cognates are M *trūs* and MM *tru?* /kraoh/ 'male, husband', Ch. and Mu. /ntruh/ 'male', and KBol. /truy/ 'male of deer'. Mon and Khmer, incidentally, show a slight divergence in semantic development: while Khmer has both *cmoql* / and /traoh/ for 'male of animals', Mon has

/həmù/ 'strong male animal' but /kraoh/ applied to human beings.

We are thus led to the question of whether Khmer has a related word for humans. OK offers no further information on this matter, but MK has the following forms:

kloh /klɔh/ 'man, virile' > *kamloh* /kəmlɔh/ 'young man'

Considering the striking equivalence of the initial clusters /tr-/ and /kl-/, we may be warranted in positing a relationship between /traoh/ and /klɔh/. To my mind, the question deserves more attention and fuller investigation than I have been able to give it.

For the time being I confine myself to suggesting the following cognates over a broad area: M.P.

- /seŋloh/ 'man' and /həlok, kəlok/ 'husband', P.
- /raɛh/ 'husband', Bi. /klo/ 'male', Bah. /klo, kəŋlo/ 'man, husband', KBol. /kəlo/ 'male, husband', Chr. /klo/ 'male' and /siklo/ 'husband', Sed. /kanow/ 'husband', St. /klau/ 'male sexual organ', /klo, klau/ 'male' and /sarɬau/ 'husband', Sr. /klau/ 'male, man' and /bəkɬau/ 'husband', Ch. /salɔɔŋ/ 'male'.

The semantic correspondence between these items is close enough to suggest an originally broader meaning for Khmer /klɔh/. While this form is not found in existing OK texts, there is no reason not to assume its existence in OK; there is likewise no reason not to assume that it may have encompassed the twin concepts of *male* and *husband*, as its cognates still do, until Skt. *pati* 'husband' came into Khmer and managed to reduce /klɔh/ to the role of the attributive verb 'to be male, virile'.

The last item I shall mention is another term for 'female, wife'. OK has a form *vrau* whose meaning

mittedly is not quite clear because of the ambiguity of the contexts in which it is found. It is nevertheless clearly related to MK *brau* /prəw/ 'old maid' and its doublet *brāv* /priəw/ 'female servant'. These two are themselves cognate with OM *brow*, *brāw* 'female', whose modern form is *brau* /prəa/ 'woman, wife'.¹⁴ Other cognates are Kh. /kabriw/ 'woman', KBol. /tria/ 'wife', and Lam. /pria/ 'girl'.

In closing, I hope, in spite of the paucity of information on the basic M.-K. vocabulary on which this brief study is based, that I have at least illustrated the importance of Old Khmer to our common task and, above all, the possibility of using it in a variety of comparative studies.

SUMMARY OF DATA

Khmer	Cognates
OK <i>jmol</i> 'male of animals'; MK <i>jhmol</i> /cmɔɔl/.	M.P. 'male': /lemol, lemoʔŋ, lemul, remol, remɔl, lemon, limo, simo, jambul, amul, remiən/; 'husband': /rəmol, ləmul, limon, limo, simo/. OM <i>jmur</i> , <i>kmur</i> ; MM <i>jmū</i> /həmù/ 'strong male'. Jar. /təno, təmo/ 'male animal'. Lam. /kamə/ 'husband'. P. /ime/ 'male, man'.
OK <i>ye</i> 'female of animals'; MK <i>ñī</i> /ɲii/. OK <i>ya-</i> 'prefix to names of women' and <i>yā</i> 'grandmother'.	OM <i>ya-</i> 'prefix'.
OK <i>vappā</i> 'father', <i>vap</i> 'men's title'; MK <i>pā</i> /baa/ 'father, procreating male'.	OM <i>amba</i> , <i>abaʔ</i> 'father', MM <i>apā</i> /əpa/. Mn.G., Ma. /baap/. Chr. /vap/. St. /bwp/. Bi. /mpə/. Br. /mpoaʔ/. KBol. /bo/. Kh. /paa, kpaa/. D., R., Sed. /pa/. Kat. /ama/. Mal. <i>bapak</i> .

- 4. OK *me, ame* 'mother'; MK *me /mɛɛ/* 'mother, procreating female'. Wide range of languages.
- 5. OK *prapvan* 'wife'; MK *prabandh /prəpun/*. Mal. *perempuan* 'woman'. M.P. /kəmpun, kəmpun, kompot, təmpun/ 'wife', /təmpun/ 'woman'. P. /ipən/ 'female, woman'. Lam. /kapun/ 'wife'. Ch. /prompuan/ 'wife'.
- 6. OK *si* 'male'. M.P. /onser/ 'man', /ʔŋsiil, siil, sir, ʔŋsir, ensir, ŋensir, niŋsar, kesir, kesiy, kesui, kesuih, kesəy/ 'male, man'. Bi. /cai/ 'husband'. Mn.G. /sae/ 'husband'.
- 7. OK *kantai* 'female, wife', *kan-* 'prefix to names of women', *tai* 'women's title', MK. *kansai /kənsay/ (?)* 'wife'. M.P. 'female of animals': /kenəʔ, ikənan/, 'woman': /kanʔ, kena, mai kənah/, 'girl': /knaʔ/, 'wife': /kəndɛ, kəndɛh, kəneh, knih, kənɛ, kəniə, kənah, kənau/. Bah. /akan, hakan/ 'female, woman'. Kh. /kənthey/ 'woman', /ka-/ 'feminine marker'. Mal. *ken* 'former title for women'.
- 8. OK *ghoda* 'male', *gho* 'men's title'. No cognates known.
- 9. OK *tamrus* < **trus*, MK *tros /traoh/* 'strong male of animals'. OM *trūs*, MM *truʔ /kraoh/* 'male, husband'. Ch., Ku. /ntruh/ 'male'. KBol. /truy/ 'male of deer'.
- 10. MK *kloḥ /klɔh/* 'male, virile', > *kamloḥ /kəmlɔh/* 'young man'. M.P. /səŋloh/ 'man', /həlok, kəlok/ 'husband'. P. /raleh/ 'husband'. Bi. /klo/ 'male'. Chr. /klo/ 'male', /si-klo/ 'husband'. Sed. /kanow/ 'husband'. KBol. /kəlo/ 'male, husband'. Bah. /klo, kəŋlo/. St. /klau/ 'male sexual organ', /klau, klo/ 'male', /sarlau/ 'husband'. Sr.

/klau/ 'man, male',
/bɛklau/ 'husband'. Ch.
/salɔŋ/ 'male'.

OK *vrau* 'female, woman', MK *brau* /prɛw/ 'old maid', *brāv* /priɛw/ 'female servant'.
OM *brow*, *braw* 'female, woman', MM *brau* /prɛa/ 'woman, wife'. Kh.
/kabriw/ 'woman'. KBol.
/tria/ 'wife'. Lam.
/pria/ 'girl'.

¹ Khmer epigraphy is usually divided into two periods, namely, (a) Old Khmer, from the 7th to the 13th century, including a pre-Angkorian (7th to 9th century) and an Angkorian (9th to 13th century) sub-period, and (b) Middle Khmer, from the 14th to the 18th century. While the earliest dated inscription is from 611 A.D., there are numerous undated inscriptions some of which are attributed to earlier dates on good paleographic grounds. The Angkorian period begins in 802 A.D., when Jayavarman II proclaimed the independence of Cambodia from Javanese suzerainty. It goes without saying that one must be flexible in applying this classification to lexical studies, which reveal a broad overlap between the successive periods.

² It has been pointed out by B. Rollet, an agronomist, that this distinction between *male* and *female* for plants or for different parts of a plant in the popular taxonomy is usually based on the size rather than the sex of plants of the same kind, *male* being applied to larger individuals or parts, *female* to smaller ones.

³ K. 562, l. 8, *IC* II: 196.

⁴ Walter Skeat and Charles O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (New York: Dover, 1966), I. The vocabularies I refer to are mainly for Sakai, Semang, Senoi, Jakun, and Besis, which I group together as M.P. (=Malay Peninsula). Other abbreviations used here are Bah. = Bahnar, Bi. = Biat, Br. = Brou, Ch. = Chong, Chr. = Chrau, D. = Danaw, Jar. = Jarai, Kat. = Katu, KBol. = Kha Boloven, Kh. = Khasi, Kuy. = Kuy, Lam. = Lamet, Ma. = Maa, Mal. = Malay, MK = modern Khmer, M.-K. = Mon-Khmer, MM = modern Mon, M.G. = Mnong Gar, OK = Old Khmer, OM = Old Mon, P. = Palaung, R. = Riang, Sed. = Sedang, Skt. = Sanskrit, Sr. = Sre, St. = Stieng.

⁵ Pierre-Bernard Lafont, *Lexique français - jarai - vietnamien* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1968).

⁶ G.H. Luce and Bohmu Ba Shin, "Pagan Myinkaba Kubyauk-Gyi Temple of Rājakumār (1113 A.D.)," in *BBHC*, II (1961): 343 (221).

⁷ H.L. Shorto, *A Dictionary of Modern Spoken Mon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 442. It is tempting to see a cognate relationship between OK *tmur* 'cattle' and OK *jmol* (= OM *jmur* ~ *kmur*) 'male' and to surmise that at the pre-epigraphic stage of Khmer *tmur* was likewise an attributive verb meaning 'to be a strong male', subsequently undergoing restriction to 'male cattle', then generalization to 'cattle'.

⁸ *IC* II: 16-7. The forms *ye* and *ya-* may be referable to OK *yā* 'grandmother'.

⁹ K. 956, l. 47, *IC* VII: 131.

¹⁰ K. 493, l. 20, *IC* II: 150.

¹¹ K. 505, *IC* V: 23.

¹² Middle and modern Khmer have *kansai* /kənsay/, an extremely rare and elegant term for 'wife' which may well be cognate with OK *kantai* despite the difficulty of relating a dental stop with the sibilant.

¹³ It is still so used in MK, though it now has a somewhat derogatory flavor.

¹⁴ What about Indonesian *pria* 'male, man'? On the basis of the attested confusion of opposing concepts linked as a recurring pair, it might be referred to our /priəw/.

