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: /cmq̄ol/ 'male' and /niː/ '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

/kəŋ cmq̄ol/ 'male cattle, bull' : /kəŋ niː/ 'female cattle, cow'

/pkaa cmq̄ol/ 'male flower' : /pkaa niː/ '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 /cmɔpɔi/ 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, we find for male the following terms which are clearly related to our /cmɔpɔi/:

'male' : /lemol, lemoʔŋ, lemul, remol, remɔl, lemon, limo, simo, jambul, amul, remiəŋ/

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

Blagden also cites Chréai (= Jarai) /tamo/, while Afont gives /təno/ for 'male animal'. We also find a Female form /kame/ 'husband' and P. /imə/ 'male, man'.

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

bodhisat das cîn kmur 'the Bodhisatta was a strong male elephant'

The old form jmur has become jmû /hemû/ in modern Mon, where it still means 'to be of great strength'.

2. For female we have OK ye versus MK ɲiŋ /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, is a long list of slaves and contains quite a few names of females such as

ku yahun, ku yavaï, ku yalaih, ku yañau, ku yamen, ku yasat, ku yamâe, ku yacâh, ku yamun, ku yavaïh, ku yavomin, ku yakân, ku yaroân, ku yamâl ...

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 /cmɔqɔ/ and /mii/. In other words, male and female animals can be conceived of as 'procreating creatures'. Thus /bɔɔ kɔɔ/ 'sire cattle, bull': /mɛɛ kɔɔ/ 'dam cattle, cow' /bɔɔ/ 'father' and /mɛɛ/ 'mother' go back respectively to OK vɔpɔ 'father' and me or ame 'mother', applied to human beings. The form vɔpɔ shows a most interesting evolution. In the middle of the OK period (9th century) it split into two elements. The syllable vɔp, 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 sṛī /srey/ 'female, woman' < Skt. sṛī pruṣ /proh/ 'male, man' < Skt. puruṣa
Corresponding to this pair is another deserving of close attention, namely

\[ pt\ddash / \text{pdey} / \text{'husband'} \lt \text{Skt. pati} \]
\[ prabandha / \text{prapun} \sim \text{prapun} / \text{'wife'} \]

His last form is clearly of non-Indic origin. It occurs in a 10th-century inscription, written *prapvan*, which reminds one of Mal. *perempuan* 'woman'. 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 *str\ddash puru\ddash a* 'female and male', which often occur in combination with -jana 'group, people' as collective nouns.

1.1. 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 well. 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 *k\ddash n\ddash um kantai 2*, 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:

\[ anak si *man, men* : anak kantai *woman, women* \]

1.2. According to my data, OK *si* has M.P. cognates meaning 'man' or 'male': /?onser, ?n\ddash sli\ddash l, si\ldash l, sir, ?n\ddash sir, ensir, ?n\ddash ensir, n\ddash s\ddashsar, kesir, kesi\ldash y, kesui,
kesuhih, kesèy/. 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 list of slaves offered to a vihāra:

\[\text{vā sir kantai ku yoŋ (1.4) } 'vā Sir, wife ku Yoŋ'}
\[\text{vā pār kantai vā ku sol (1. 5) } 'vā Par, his wife ku Sol'}
\[\text{vā joŋ kantai vā ku mās (1. 7) } 'vā Joŋ, his wife ku Mās', etc.\]

In the second place, like si, kantai has M.P. cognates meaning 'female of animals' (/kena\?, ikena\,), 'woman' (/kna\?, kena, mai kena\,), 'girl' (/kna\?/), and 'wife' (/kendē, kende\, kene\, knih, kene\, kene\, kena\, kena\,). In the Indochinese Peninsula we find Bah. /akan, hakan/ 'female, woman' and, further north, Kh. /kenthey/ 'woman'. 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, 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
ass 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. \textit{puru\=ga} 'male, man', the lower class must be content to employ in the same senses the word \textit{ghoda}, probably of native origin, in lieu of \textit{si}. Actually \textit{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 \textit{si} belonged and that, as a result of normal dialect competition, it managed to supplant \textit{si} from the language as a whole until it was itself replaced by Skt. \textit{puru\=ga} after the close of the Angkorian period.

The Angkorian term \textit{ghoda} yields its first syllable, \textit{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 \textit{tamrus} 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. \textit{Tamrus} is clearly a derivative of the same \textit{*trus} which yields K \textit{tros} /tra\=ho/, meaning 'a strong male' and applied mainly to monkeys and buffaloes. Some cognates are M \textit{tr\=us} and MM \textit{tru?} /kra\=ho/ 'male, husband', Ch. and u. /ntru\=h/ 'male', and KBo\=l. /truy/ 'male of deer'. On and Khmer, incidentally, show a slight divergence in semantic development: while Khmer has both \textit{cm\=oo\=l/} and /tra\=ho/ for 'male of animals', Mon has
/hɛmụ/ '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:

\textit{klo̞h} /klo̞/: 'man, virile' > \textit{kamlo̞h} /kamlo̞/: 'young man'

Considering the striking equivalence of the initial clusters /tr-/ and /kl-/ we may be warranted in positing a relationship between /traoh/ and /klo̞h/. 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. /seŋlo̞/: 'man' and /hələk, kələk/: 'husband', P. /rale̞h/: 'husband', Bi. /klo̞/: 'male', Bah. /klo̞, keŋlo̞/: 'man, husband', KBoL. /kele̞o/: 'male, husband', Chr. /klo̞/: 'male' and /slkie̞o/: 'husband', Sed. /kanow/: 'husband', St. /klau/: 'male sexual organ', /klo̞, klau/: 'male' and /sarə̆ru/: 'husband', Sr. /klau/: 'male, man' and /bəkle̞u/: 'husband', Ch. /sə̆ruo̞/: 'male'.

The semantic correspondence between these items is close enough to suggest an originally broader meaning for Khmer /klo̞h/. 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. \textit{pati} 'husband' came into Khmer and managed to reduce /klo̞h/ 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 \textit{vrau} whose meaning
mittedly is not quite clear because of the ambiguity in the contexts in which it is found. It is nevertheless clearly related to MK brau /préw/ 'old maid' and its doublet brāw /préw/ 'female servant'. These two themselves cognate with OM brow, brāw 'female', whose modern form is brau /préa/ 'woman, wife'. The cognates are Kh. /kabriw/ 'woman', KBoI. /tría/ 'wife', and Lam. /préa/ '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

1. OK jmól 'male of animals'; MK jhmól /cmqol/. M.P. 'male': /lemol, lemoʔ, lemul, remol, remol, lemon, limo, simo, jambul, amul, remiæn/; 'husband': /remol, lemul, limon, limo, simo/. OM jmur, kmur;
   MM jmū /hmū/ 'strong male'. Jar. /tæn, tæmo/ 'male animal'. Lam. /kama/ 'husband'. P. /imæ/ 'male, man'.

2. OK ye 'female of animals'; MK ʔnī /ni/. OK ya- 'prefix to names of women' and yā 'grandmother'.

     OK vappā 'father', vap 'men's title'; MK pā /baa/ 'father, pro-
     creating male'.

     OM amba, abaʔ 'father',
4. OK me, aме 'mother'; MK me /me/ 'mother, procreating female'.

Wide range of languages.

5. OK prapvan 'wife'; MK prabandh /prepun/.

Mal. perempuan 'woman'.
M.P. /kampun, kømpun, kompot, tømpun/ 'wife', /tømpun/ 'woman'. P. /ipen/ 'female, woman'.
Lam. /kapun/ 'wife'. Ch. /prompuan/ 'wife'.

6. OK si 'male'.

M.P. /onser/ 'man', /
\?\$iil, siil, sir, \?\$ir, ensir, n\$enir, n\$sar, kesir, kesiy, kesi, kesei, kesei, keseiy/
'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 /kønsai/ (?) 'wife'.

M.P. 'female of animals': /kena?, ikena/, 'woman':
/kana?, kena, mai kena/, 'girl': /kna?/, 'wife':
/kønde, køndeh, køneh, kni, køne, kønie, kønah, kena/. Bah. /akan,
hakan/ 'female, woman'.
Kh. /kønthey/ 'woman', /ka- 'feminine marker'.
Mal. kən '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 trúš, MM tru? /kroh/
'male, husband'. Ch.,
Ku. /ntru/ 'male'.
KBo1. /tru/ 'male of deer'.

10. MK kloã /kloh/ 'male, virile', > kamloã /kømløh/ 'young man'.

M.P. /senloh/ 'man', /hølok, kølok/ 'husband'.
P. /ralh/ 'husband'.
Bi. /klo/ 'male'. Chr.
/klo/ 'male', /si-klo/
'husband'. Sed. /kanow/
'husband'. KBo1. /kølo/
'male, husband'. Bah.
/klo, kølo/. St. /klau/
'male sexual organ', /klau, klo/ 'male',
/sarlau/ 'husband'. Sr.
1Khmer epigraphy is usually divided into two periods, namely, (a) Old Khmer, from the 7th to the 14th century, including a pre-Angkorian (7th to 9th century) and an Angkorian (9th to 13th century) subperiod, 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 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.

2It 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.

3K. 562, 1. 8, IC II: 196.


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'.


10 K. 493, 1. 20, *IC* II: 150.


12 Middle and modern Khmer have *kantsai* /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 *priα* 'male, man'? On the basis of the attested confusion of opposing concepts linked as a recurring pair, it might be referred to our /prίew/. 