Personal Pronouns in Pacôh
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O. Introduction

The personal pronouns of Pacôh\(^1\) form a regular system having singular, dual, and plural in all three persons. That certain ones of these pronouns can take affixes (i.e. when used as direct object or possessor) is of particular interest because it has not been reported before in Mon-Khmer languages, to my knowledge.

The purpose of this paper is to present the personal pronoun system of Pacôh with the meanings of the pronouns and their syntactic usages.

\(^1\) Pacôh is a member of the Mon-Khmer language family and is spoken by approximately eight thousand people in Thừa Thiên province of Viet Nam. It may be mutually intelligible with some dialects of Ta-Oi in Laos.

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1. Definition

A personal pronoun in Pac₇h is a nonspecific word which can be used in place of a noun (or name) while retaining the same meaning as the noun. Cubuat pōc tōq vēl Pac₇h ‘Cubuat goes to village Pac₇h’, Do pōc tōq vēl ngai ‘He goes to village their’.

2. Pronoun sets

By arranging the pronouns in a matrix one can see a definite pattern being formed. This becomes especially clear when the three matrices below (Sets I, II, and III) are compared with each other.
### Personal Pronouns in Pacôh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Person</th>
<th>2nd Person</th>
<th>3rd Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cr / day</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nháng</td>
<td>inha</td>
<td>anha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>ipe</td>
<td>ape / nägi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Set 1 Regular Pronoun Forms**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Person</td>
<td>acú / aday</td>
<td>anháng</td>
<td>ahe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Person</td>
<td>amay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ado inha</td>
<td>ado ipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Person</td>
<td>ado</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ado anha</td>
<td>ado ape /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>angai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Set II

Indirect Object Pronoun Forms
PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN PACOH

Possessive Pronoun Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Dual</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>ncū / nday</td>
<td>nnhāng</td>
<td>nghe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>mmay</td>
<td>ndo inha</td>
<td>ndo ipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>ndo</td>
<td>ndo anha</td>
<td>ndo ape / nngai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Set III
Note the regularity of the forms appearing within the block structure of the matrices (rows: 2nd and 3rd person; columns: dual and plural). These forms show similarity in internal structure as well as external function. These four pronouns (omitting *ngai*) in Sets II and III do not take affixes directly but are preceded by the morpheme *do*\(^2\) which takes the prefix in each case.

It may be observed that the pronouns in the matrices which can take prefixes have not reached the two-syllable phonological limit on word length in Pacōh, while those which cannot take prefixes have reached the limit.

An L pattern is formed in the matrices by the upper row (1st person) and the left column (singular). This implies that there is some sort of ranking whereby the forms which appear in the L pattern outrank those which appear in the block pattern.\(^3\) Checking through text material has revealed a ranking of frequency in that the forms in the L Pattern occur much more frequently than those in the block pattern. While the forms in the block pattern show regularity of internal

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\(^2\) I am leaving for future treatment any speculation regarding possible relationship between the third person singular pronoun *do* 'his' and the morpheme *do* which, in its affixed form, precedes pronouns.

structure, the forms of the L pattern show marked irregularity. There is, however, a similarity in external function, as each of the forms in the L pattern can take the prefixes in Sets II and III.

Though the alternate third person plural form ngai occurs in the block pattern it has no features which would group it with the other four forms occurring there. Ngai seems to belong with the forms of the L pattern in that it takes the prefixes in Sets II and III and occurs frequently in speech and text. It seems possible that this apparent conflict between systems may be the result of Pacoh pronouns going through some sort of transitional period.

3. Description of pronouns

3. 1. Pronoun forms in the matrices

(1) Cur ‘I’ (first person singular) Cur póc alîrung may ‘I go with you’. Cur has an allomorph day which is used when one quotes another person’s use of cur. Do tòng acur, «Day póc alîrung may» ‘He said to me, «I’ll go with you».

(2) May ‘you’ (second person singular) May póc tôq dûng ‘You go to the house’

(3) Do ‘he, she, it’ (third person singular) Do póc tôq dûng ‘He (she or it) goes to the house’. When do is used to refer to a person it can only be singular. However, in referring to
the plural of animals or things (where ngai ‘they’ or ape ‘they’ cannot be used), do occurs with a pluralizer such as ngéq ‘all’, è ‘many’, clúng ‘many’. Ngéq do lúh ‘They (animals) ran away’. Amâh ngéq do án cuxo? ‘What those things that (are) red?’

Do has a bound allomorph u- which only occurs in the subject slot and is affixed to one-syllable verbs. It seems that do and u- can be used interchangeably when acting as subject. Do póc tôq mmo? Uchô tôq dúng ‘He went where? He returned to the house’. When referring to animals or things u- can be pluralized like do. Ngép ulúh ‘All they (animals) ran away’, È lur ulú ‘many very they (animals) ran away’.

(4) Nhàng ‘we (two)’ (first person dual) Nhàng póc tôq dúng ‘We (two) go to the house’

(5) Inha ‘you (two)’ (second person dual) Inha póc tôq dúng ‘You (two) go to the house’

(6) Anha ‘those two’ (third person dual) Anha póc tôq dúng ‘Those two go to the house’

(7) He ‘we’ (first person plural) He póc tôq dúng ‘We go to the house’

(8) Ipe ‘you’ (second person plural) Ipe póc tôq dúng ‘You (all) go to the house’

(9) Ape ‘they’ (third person plural specific)
Ape póc tốq dúng ‘They go to the house’. Ape is used in situations where both the speaker and the hearer understand who is being referred to.

(10) Ngai ‘they’ (third person plural nonspecific) Ngai póc tốq dúng ‘They go to the house’. Ngai can be used whether the identity of the referent is known or not. Ngai can only be used of persons, never of animals. Although Ngai is usually plural in number it can sometimes be singular nonspecific, ngai ncôh ‘person or persons there’.

With the exception of cur ‘I’ and ngai ‘they’, all the pronouns listed above can refer to an animal or have an animal included in their number. Ape ‘they’ can be used to refer to animals only after the specific animal has been named in the text. When a dual or plural pronoun refers to persons and an animal it is preferable to state the animal specifically. Nhàng acho póc ‘we dog go’ (I and the dog go), Inha acho póc ‘You two (including dog) go’, He acho póc ‘We (including dog) go’.

3. 2. Additional pronoun forms

(1) Mâh ‘your’ is a morpheme which alternates with may as a possessive when following a kinship term. Mâh cannot take affixes and cannot occur in any other slot in the phrase or clause. Ndo Ixai mâh ‘Belongs to brother
your’, Nhằng icän mårh tông amay ‘We mother yours say to you’.

(2) Ngâh is a pronoun which is nonspecific as to person or number. It is a convenient means of referring back to a given subject in text or conversation without using the name or the more specific pronoun form. Nám ihóm Cubuat chô dâng neh ngâh yoa tâq bai ‘If you see Cubuat return place this you tell work lesson’. In this illustration the subject is the hearer, as shown by the situational context of a direct address.

Ngâh has a bound allomorph i- (cf. ihóm in the sentence above) which can occur with all one-syllable verbs. Like ngâh it can only fill the subject slot and refers back to a noun, either in text or context. ngâh can be substituted for i- in all places where i- is found to occur. i- can only be affixed to one-syllable verbs whereas ngâh can occur with all verbs.

(3) Tô seems to mean ‘oneself’ somewhat like ‘mành’ in Vietnamese. In text material we have found tô being used in the following ways: Parents instructing their children seem to use tô meaning ‘we inclusive’; A man giving a message to his wife used tô to mean ‘you’; A young man sending a message to his friends used tô to mean ‘one does something...’ (like ‘one of us’).

Tô can have all the syntactic uses that the pronouns
in Sets I, II, and III can have. However, unlike the other one-syllable pronouns in the matrices, tö cannot take prefixes. Instead, when tö is used as indirect object or possessive, the prefixes of Sets II and III are bound to the morpheme do and precede tö. Ngae tông àdo tö ‘They say to us’, Nnéh ndo tö ‘This is mine (ours)’.

3.3. Expansions Pronouns may be expanded in the following ways:

(1) Number + Classifier + Pronoun. bar náq nhâng ‘two persons we’. The person classifier náq seems to be the only classifier which can be used in this construction with pronouns.

He poc ‘We-pl. go’
Pai náq he poc ‘We three go’

(2) General Pluralizer ± Intensifier + Pronoun. General pluralizers are words such as ngéq ‘all’, è ‘many’. The optional intensifier is lur ‘completely, very’.

Ipe poc ‘You-pl. go’
Ngéq ipe poc ‘You all go’
Do lüh ‘They (animals) ran away’
Ngéq do lüh ‘They all ran away’
Ngéq lur do lüh ‘Absolutely all of them ran away’
È lur ngai póc ‘Very many of them went’

(3) Pronoun + Modifier. The modifier slot may be filled by a descriptive word, phrase, or clause.

**Ape póc ‘They went’**

**Ape caket póc ‘They (the little ones) went’**

**Ngai ncôngh póc ‘They (the men) went’**

**Do ăn hỏi papêngh póc ‘He (who shoots well) went’**

**Ngai âm póc pág póc ‘They (who go picking) went’**

(4) Pronoun + Specific Referent. **Nhăng icán màh tông ‘we-2 mother your say’ ‘Your mother and I say’.**

**He cha, he a-i, he a-em cu cha lur xay ‘we eat we mother we younger-siblings my eat very full’ ‘I and my mother and younger brothers and sisters eat well’**.

This construction is most often used with 1st person dual or plural pronouns, and specifies more precisely the individuals being referred to by the pronouns. The ‘I’ of the 1st person pronouns is understood to be already specified, so only the names of the other persons need to be added. **Nhăng tông ‘We-2 say’ (I and someone else), Nhăng Cubuat tông ‘Cubuat and I say’**.

**3. 4. Pronoun with Subject Referent.** Subject Referent + Juncture or Tense Marker + Subject Pronoun. The effect of this construction is somewhat like that of
the expansions discussed above. When the Subject of a sentence is a pronoun, it is possible to specify, by means of a noun or pronoun before the sentence, the particular person or item to which the pronoun refers. This preposed specification we call a Subject Referent, as the pronoun in the Subject slot appears to be the main subject of the sentence. When the Subject Referent is a noun, any pronoun can occur in the Subject slot. Juncture generally consists of a slight hesitation; tense markers are words like acân ‘future’, yôl ‘still’, kilâng ‘immediate past’, cunêq ‘immediate future’.

Ngâi pôc ‘They go’

A-äm anhi, ngâi pôc ‘fathers uncles, they go’ They (fathers and uncles) go

A-äm anhi acân ngâi pôc ‘fathers uncles will they go’ They (fathers and uncles) will go

When both the Subject Referent and the Subject are pronouns there is always a tense marker; the Subject Referent pronoun can be only nhâng, he, tô, inha, or ipe, and the Subject pronoun must be either ngâh or i.

Ngâh pôc ‘Someone goes’

Nhâng acân ngâh pôc ‘Someone (us) will go’

It is interesting to note that when arranged in a matrix (Set IV) the pronouns which can occur in the Subject Referent slot also form a block structure, but not the same as the L and block structures in Sets I, II, and III.
4. Syntactic usage

(1) Subject of the verb (Pronoun Set I, ngáh, i-, u-, tõ). Cubuat póc tõq dúng ‘Cubuat goes to the house’, Do póc tõq dúng ‘He goes to the house’, Upóc tõq dúng ‘He goes to the house’.

(2) Direct object of the verb (Set I, tõ). Culáh púh Cubuat ‘Culáh hit Cubuat’, Culáh púh do ‘Culáh hit him’.

(3) Indirect Object of the verb (Set II, tõ). The prefix a- is a preposition meaning ‘to’ or ‘for’ and occurs affixed either directly to the pronoun (Set II, L pattern) or to the morpheme do which precedes the pronoun (Set II, block pattern and tõ). Culáh tông amay ‘Culáh says to you’, Culah tông ado inha ‘I say to you-two’, Ngai tông ado tõ ‘They say to us (inclusive)’.

(4) Object of the preposition (Set I, tõ). Acay póc tõq he ‘Child go to us’, May póc alûng eur ‘You go with me’.

(5) Subject of a noun or of an adjective complement (Set I, tõ). Cîr ticuai ‘I person’, He clûng ‘we many’, Tô clûng ‘we (inclusive) many’, Inha nday vêl, cîr nday vêl ‘You-two different village, I different village’.

(6) Possessor of another noun (Set I, tõ, mâh). À-âm a-i Cubuat ‘father mother Cubuat’, À-âm a-i do ‘father mother his’. 
(7) Head of possession construction (Set III, tö). *Dótóng, "Mmay put hon nday"* 'He said, "Yours is bigger than mine."' The difference between this way of expressing possession and that in 4. 6 is similar to the English difference between 'my' and 'mine'.

The prefix *n- (n- ng- m-)* which is affixed either to the pronoun (Set III, L pattern) or to the morpheme *do* (Set III, block pattern) is a bound allomorph of the morpheme *án*. Allomorphs of the morpheme *án* occur both as free forms and bound, and function as a connective meaning 'who' or 'that which'.

In a possessive pronoun form, *án* replaces the noun which is being possessed and the personal pronoun replaces the name of the possessor noun. The entire construction fills a single slot in a clause and indicates possession.

(8). Replacer of conjunction *möi* 'and' (Set I, block structure). Four pronouns can act as conjunctions, replacing *möi* 'and', when pronouns or nouns are connected in a series: (1) *Inha* 'you-two' can only be used to connect *may* 'you' and one other person. *May möi Cubuat 'you and Cubuat', May inha Cubuat 'you and Cubuat*. (2) *Anha* 'those two' is used to connect two persons or two groups of persons or one person and one group. *Cw anha Cubuat 'I and Cubuat', Culáh anha Cubuat 'Culáh and Cubuat*, *Ticuai Vël Arám anha ticuai Vël Tallày ‘peo-
ple Village Arâm and people village Tallây', *He anha Cu-
buat 'we and Cubuat'. (3) *Ipe ‘you (plural)’ is used to
connect three or more persons, as in the construction
may *ipe Culáh *ipe Cubuat ‘you and Culáh and Cu-
buat’. (4) *Ape ‘they’ (specific) is used to connect three
persons, or one person and a group of more than two
persons. *Cubuat *ape Culáh *ape Achúl ‘Cubuat and Cu-
láh and Achúl’, *Culáh *ape *he ‘Culáh and we’.

It has been pointed out that the four pronouns in the
block structure of Set I are the only ones which can act
as conjunctions. It is interesting to note that in these
types of conjunction constructions only the five pronouns in
the L pattern and *ngai can act as subjects (i.e. *cu
(day), may, *do, nháng, *he, and *ngai).