

A Note on New Word Formation in Modern Khmer*

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CAMBODIA EXPERIENCED ITS FIRST WAVE OF “LINGUISTIC CRISIS” when the country gained independence from France in the mid-1950s. Nationalist exaltation was then born. It was decided that all French words used in the Cambodian administration and justice and educational systems had thus to be replaced. A *Commission Culturelle* had been created in 1946 to meet this urgent need. The members of this Commission were almost entirely Buddhist monks and scholars, who were mostly, if not all, competent in Pāli and Sanskrit. Overall, their duty was to translate French words that were used in different fields into Khmer.

François Martini, an outstanding French linguist, had the opportunity to take part in the commission between 1946 and 1950 and observed how the Khmer created new words. In his 1962 paper entitled “De la création actuelle des mots en cambodgien,” the author pointed out how the *Commission Culturelle* was working to create new words in Khmer. The principal processes of creating new words were then as follows (Martini 1962: 162):

I. Extension of meaning of a Khmer word or its metaphorical use, e.g. *kañ* [kaŋ] ‘wheel’ was extended to ‘bicycle’; *grāp* [krəp] ‘stone, pit, pip’ was extended to ‘bullet.’ From it later were derived *grāp* *paek* [krəp-ɬæc] ‘bomb, grenade’ and *grāp* *paek* *taï* [krəp-ɬæc-ɬaj] ‘hand grenade’ ...

II. Maintenance of phonetically adapted French words and especially those which had become “too popular” in usage, e.g. *phuy’ū* [bujro:] ‘office’ (Fr. bureau), *phus(ti)* [poh] ‘post office’ (Fr. poste), *taem* [taem] ‘stamp’ (Fr. timbre), *phūlis* [po:lih] ‘police’ ...

III. Loan translation of French words, e.g. *desacar* [tħsə-ca:] ‘tourist’ [Skt. *deśa*, Pā. *desa* ‘region, country’ + Skt., Pā. *cara* ‘who moves, walks’], *dūrasābd* [tu:rə-sap] ‘telephone’ [Skt. *dūra* ‘far’ + *śabda* ‘sound, speech’] ... These two words are built from Indic elements. As we will see, these kinds of words could be built from Khmer words as well.

IV. Direct Indic (Pāli and Sanskrit) loanwords or new compound words built with Pāli or Sanskrit elements, e.g. *seribhāb* [serəjphiəp] ‘freedom’ (Pā. *serī* ‘free, freedom’ + *bhāva* (> *bhāb*) ‘state, condition, nature, shape, aspect, way, manner, fashion’).

In his paper, Martini omitted to deal with the primary morphological process of Khmer,¹ which is affixation. I shall call this process V and examine it in the last part of this paper.

With the economic reopening of the country towards a free market, and political movement towards democracy during these last few decades, Cambodia must presently face another wave of linguistic crisis: the need to translate or create new words related to different fields such as advanced technology, computer science, electronics, the environment, law, administration, democratization, tourism and so on.

The purpose of this paper is to study how the Khmer language behaves with respect to new word formation after almost half a century. Does the language use the same processes to create new words or adopt different processes? What are the trends in creating new words? I will try to answer these questions and also present the general awareness of native speakers (both ordinary and educated) of these processes. To facilitate the presentation, I will keep the order of Martini’s criteria, as quoted earlier in the introduction.

I. Extension of meaning of a Khmer word or its metaphorical usage

The process of meaning extension or “grinding” phenomena normally creates abstract or metaphorical nouns from concrete nouns in a language. This is true, though it is not always the case in Khmer, as we will see. The first extended meaning of a Khmer word that comes to mind is *jajuh* [cɔcuh]² ‘to fluff up’ as in *kho āv jajuh* [khaɔʔa:ɯ-cɔcuh] (‘clothes’ + ‘to fluff up’) for ‘secondhand clothes.’ Clothes sellers imported these kinds of clothes to Cambodia in the mid 1980s and piled them up on mats to sell in market areas. Clients came and fluffed up clothes to select their favorite ones before bargaining the price, hence the name of these imported clothes. During that time or a little bit later on, traders also imported secondhand motorcycles and other vehicles, especially from or via Thailand. Of course, clients did not fluff up either the motorcycles or the cars, but the metaphorical usage of *jajuh* as ‘secondhand items’ had been established, hence the expressions *ṁūtū jajuh* [mɔ:to:ɔ-cɔcuh] ([mɔ:to:] ‘motorcycle’ + ‘to fluff up’) for ‘secondhand motorcycle’ and *lān jajuh* [la:n-cɔcuh] ([la:n] ‘car’ + ‘to fluff up’) for ‘secondhand car.’

Other extended meanings of Khmer words, not necessarily abstract, are: *srom anāmāy* [sraɔm-ʔa:nɑ:maj] ([sraɔm] ‘case, cover, envelope’ + [ʔa:nɑ:maj] ‘hygiene’) for ‘condom.’ The word *srom* [sraɔm] had already been extended to *srom khuor* [sraɔm-khuə] ‘meninx (anat.)’ (‘case’ + ‘marrow, brains’). *Āv bhliēn* [ʔa:ɯ-phliəŋ] ([ʔa:ɯ] ‘shirt’ + [phliəŋ] ‘rain’) ‘rain coat’ is a Khmer compound-word that was recently extended to ‘condom.’ Some other formations are *ṭāk kañ*, *sīevabhau phnat*, *druñ jrūk*, *kāp ṭāv*, which I will explain below:

Kañ [ka:ŋ] normally means ‘ring, circle, bracelet, necklace ...’ It has been extended to female contraception. This word was heard in the 1980s and 1990s and was then commonly used. So *ṭāk kañ* [ṭaʔ-ka:ŋ] basically means ‘to use female contraception,’ specifically, intrauterine devices.

Phnat [phnat] means ‘fold’ (n.) (derived by infixation from *pat* [bat] ‘to fold, bend’). *Sīevabhau phnat* [siəu-phəu-phnat] designates ‘brochures, pamphlets’ recently distributed by NGOs in order to educate and inform people.

Druñ jrūk [trɔŋ-cru:ʔ] is a pig’s cage. Its new meaning is ‘pound sign’ (in the North American sense, this refers to the sign #). Modern Cambodia, like other Southeast Asian countries, is swamped with cell phones. The sign is so called because it resembles a pig’s cage.

The expression *kāp ṭāv* [kap-ṭa:ɯ] (*lit.* to cut, hack with a sword) was heard a lot in the sixties and seventies when Hong Kong sword-fighting movies poured into Cambodia. They are called *kun kāp ṭāv* [kɔn-kap-ṭa:ɯ]. It has been extended to mean ‘to cheat badly everybody without exception (friends, relatives).’

There is also *mcās phdah* [mɔcah-phteah] ‘owner of a house’ ([mɔcah] ‘owner, master’ + [phteah] ‘house’), which has been extended to a host country receiving international sporting events or meetings.

An extended word in the realm of new technology is *rāv rak* [riəu-rɔ:ʔ] ([riəu] ‘to grope, search’ + [rɔ:ʔ] ‘to look for’) ‘to search with the hands, to search by observing closely, to analyze or examine in order to find the truth’ which gives ‘to search (on the internet).’

Finally, one of the most interesting extended words is *āṇikajan* [ʔa:nəʔkaʔcɔŋ] (< Pāli *āṇā* + *ik* > *āṇik* + *jana*) ‘citizen.’ The *Vacanānukram Khmaer* defines this word as follows “people who are under the authority of others or people who live, work in a foreign country.” This word was probably created to designate Vietnamese and Chinese immigrants living in Cambodia. The word was extended to ‘immigrants,’ including Khmers who had lived abroad, when they came back to

Cambodia in the early 1980s. The latter had difficulty in accepting this name, when they were in their own country, particularly given the fact that the country was then supported by Vietnam.

II. Maintenance of phonetically adapted French or English words

Phonetically adapted French words, especially those which became too popular to simply erase, still exist both in standard and popular usage as the Khmer had borrowed from the French since the beginning of French colonial rule in 1863 (cf. Sok 1999). At present, Khmer continues to borrow a few words from French, though more words are now borrowed from English.³ Cambodia’s joining ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in 1999 ensured that Khmer would increase its English loanwords as the member States of ASEAN use English as a common language. Other factors such as the return of Khmer emigrants, especially from English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada and the United States essentially), has intensified the borrowing of English words. Moreover, most NGOs operating in Cambodia are English-speaking organizations. They are partly responsible for English loanwords by introducing new concepts into the country.

As we observe the present linguistic situation of Cambodia, young people learn more and more English as it is easier for them to find a job with their English skills (Clayton 2002). They form part of those who introduce English loanwords into Khmer. Some English loans appear, disappear and reappear in usage.⁴ Others have been adopted into the language. Here is a short list of English loans taken at random to illustrate the above concern:

DJ (Disc Jockey) [d̥iːceː]	guest house [g̥eːh-haː]
heroin [heː-roː-ʔin, ʔeː-roː-ʔin]	quota [koːtaː] (<i>English, but probably influenced by the spelling</i>)
e-mail [ʔiː-meːl]	mouse [maː] for computer
Aids [ʔeːt]	barcode [baː-koːt] (<i>its pronunciation suggests that the word is borrowed from the French, but the syntax suggests that it comes from the English; however, the influence of the spelling cannot be excluded.</i>)
HIV [hiːv]	laser [leː-sɜː]
show [soː] (<i>any kind of public exhibition or display, especially dance</i>)	slide [slaːi]
CD [siː-diː]	VIP [βiː-ʔaː-phiː]
concert [khən-sɜːt]	computer [khəm-phjuː-thɜː] ~ [kəm-phjuː-thɜː] ~ [khəm-phjuː-thɜː]
digital [d̥iː-ciː-thaːl]	internet [ʔin-thɜː-net] ~ [ʔən-thɜː-net] ~ [ʔin-thəː-net] ~ [ʔən-thəː-net]
dinosaur [daː-noː-saː] ~ [daː-ʔ-noː-saː]	website [βeːp-saːi] ~ [βip-saːi] ~ [βəp-saːi]
masters [mah-stɜː] in Masters of Arts. There are also alternative words created from Indic roots: <i>pariññāpatr rañ</i> [paʔriʔnaːbat-rɔːŋ] and <i>anupañdit</i> [ʔaːnuʔbandit].	
NGO (<i>non-governmental organization</i>) [ʔən-ciː-ʔoː]	

It is worth noting that the phonetic variations of the last three words show that they are new candidates and that the language has not fixed a proper pronunciation yet. This is particularly true for polysyllabic words.

III. Loan translation of Western words

A loan translation or calque consists of translating a borrowed word component by component into a host language. Khmer has practiced and still practices loan translation to create new

words from Western languages, especially from English and French. Below are a few examples: *Saññā bhloen khiev* [saɲɲa:-phlɔ:ŋ-khiəu] (< [saɲɲa:] ‘sign’ + [phlɔ:ŋ] ‘fire’ + [khiəu] ‘green’) for ‘green light or go-ahead.’

Pañjī khmau [ɓaɲci:-khmau] (< [ɓaɲci:] ‘list’ + [khmau] ‘black’) for ‘black list.’

Phsār nāñit [phsa:-ŋəŋi t] (< [phsa:] ‘market’ + [ŋəŋit] ‘dark’) for ‘black market.’

Tu mül [tɔʔ-mu:l] (< [tɔʔ] ‘table’ + [mu:l] ‘round’) for ‘roundtable.’

Since Khmer borrows more and more from English as we said in section II, some loan translations of English words occur increasingly as follows:

Ghadambār [kr:haʔ-tumpɔa] ([kr:haʔ] ‘home’ + [tumpɔa] ‘page’) ‘home page’

Dambār lēn [tumpɔa-liəŋ] ([tumpɔa] ‘page’ + [liəŋ] ‘yellow’) ‘yellow pages’ (published in 2003)

Manuss khlaṃṃ [mənuh-khlaŋ] ([mənuh] ‘human, man, people’ + [khlaŋ] ‘strong’) ‘strongman, a leader who obtains power by force and suppression, dictator.’ Its meaning in Khmer has changed from the original one, as defined in the Cambridge Dictionary: “a person who is very powerful and able to cause change, especially of a political type.”

Ang-kār krau raṭṭhābhipāl [ʔaŋka:-krau-rɔattha:phiʔɓa:l] (< ‘organization’ + ‘out, out of’ + ‘government’) for ‘nongovernmental organization (NGO)’ or *ang-kār min maen raṭṭhābhipāl* [ʔaŋka:-mənme:n-rɔattha:phiʔɓa:l] (< ‘organization’ + ‘not’ + ‘government’). The truncation [ʔaŋka:] is also heard.

With the inflow of foreign tourists in recent years, Cambodia has had to provide accommodation for all kinds of tourists. A loan translation here is *phdaḥ bhñiev* [phteah-phniəu] ([phteah] ‘house’ + [phniəu] ‘guest’) for ‘guesthouse’ which has rapidly fallen into disuse and is now replaced by *phdaḥ samṇāk* [phteah-samnaʔ] ([phteah] ‘house’ + [samnaʔ] ‘stay’).

Finally, there is also *pañ dham* [ɓa:ŋ-thəm] (< [ɓa:ŋ] ‘brother’ + [thəm] ‘big’) for ‘big brother.’ The word normally means “a government, ruler or person in authority that has complete power and tries to control people’s behavior and thoughts, and limit their freedom” as defined in the Cambridge Dictionary. But it has another particular meaning, which is “rascal.” This word is not necessarily a direct loan translation from English, as the expression is found in other languages in the region.

IV. Direct Indic (Pāli and Sanskrit) loanwords or loanwords compounded with the help of Pāli or Sanskrit elements

The Indic suffixal elements that Martini (*op. cit.*) mentioned in his paper are still productive. To cite some of the most common, we have *-kār* ‘act, action, affair,’ *-bhāb* [phiəp] ‘state, condition, nature, shape, aspect, way, manner, fashion,’ *-dharm* ‘order, law, usage’ [thɔa], *-kamm* [kam] ‘action, act, deed, activity,’ *-kicc* [kɛc] ‘duty, affair, act,’ *-niyam* [niʔjum] ‘-ism,’ *-sāstr* [sah] ‘teaching, treaty’ or *-vidyā* [βiʔthjiə] ‘knowledge, science...’ *-sāstr* and *-vidyā* are sometimes used interchangeably: *bhūmi-sāstr* [phu:mmiʔsah] and *bhūmividyā* [phu:mβiʔthjiə] both mean ‘geography’ but *rūpasāstr* [ru:psah, ru:pəsah] means ‘morphology’ and *rūpavidyā* [ru:pβiʔthjiə] ‘physics.’ However, Khin Sok (1999: 310 *fn* 56) pointed out that some of these suffixes such as *-kamm* and *-niyam* have been used for a long time to create new words in Khmer and that the *Commission Culturelle* simply adopted them.

-kār ‘act, action, affair’ (Skt. *kārya*, Pāli *kāra*)

Bahikār [peaʔhiʔ-ka:] (< Skt. *bahis*, Pā. *bahi* ‘outside, external’ + *kār*) for ‘boycott,’ as in *dhvoe bahikār* [thβɔi-peaʔhiʔ-ka:] (to do + boycott) ‘to boycott’ (*cf.* Sam Thang 1961: 110; Tep Yok & Thao Kun 1967: 134).

Vimajjhakār [βiʔ-maccheaʔ-ka:] (< Sk., Pā. *vi* ‘apart, separate, not, free from, special’ + Pā. *majjha* ‘aver-

age, middle, medium, central' + *kār*) for 'decentralization' (cf. Sam Thang 1961: 216; Tep Yok & Thao Kun 1967: 301; R. Govind 1967: 304).

-bhāb or *bhāb*- 'state, condition, nature, shape, aspect, way, manner, fashion' (Skt., Pā. *bhāva*)

Nidaṇḍabhāb [niʔtəndə-phiəp] (< Pā. *ni* 'free from, depriving of' + *daṇḍa* 'to punish, punishment' + *bhāb*) 'impunity' (cf. Sam Thang 1961: 443; Tep Yok & Thao Kun 1967: 649). Especially, when high-ranking ministers, or members of their family do bad things and are never punished.

Tamlābhāb [dəmla:phiəp] ([dəmla:] 'transparency' + *bhāb*) 'transparency' (Hing Thoraxy & Hean Sahib 2003: 656) (a recent neologism used in politics, whereas the word *tamlā*, which is ancient, refers to kind-heartedness).

Bhāb rālūn [phiəp-rəlu:n] (*bhāb* + [rəlu:n] 'to be long and unbroken, long and tapering') 'smooth running of a negotiation, a business.'

-kicc 'duty, affair, act, that which should be done' (Pā. *kicca*)

Abhipālakicc [ʔaʔphiʔba:lləkɛc] (< Skt., Pā. *abhipāla* 'protector' + *kicca*) 'governance' (Hing Thoraxy & Hean Sahib 2003: 336). Particularly, in order to continue receiving international aid from some donors, the Cambodian government has to ensure *abhipālakicc la* [ʔaʔphiʔba:lləkɛc-ləʔa:] 'good governance.'

-kamm 'action' (Pāli *kamma*)

Visodhanakamm [βiʔsəʔtthənaʔkam] (< Sk. *visodhana*, Pā. *visodhana* 'cleaning, trying' + *kamm*) 'amendment' as in *visodhanakamm raṭṭhadhammanuññ* [βiʔsəʔtthənaʔkam-rəʔtthəʔtthəʔammənuɲ] 'constitutional amendment' (cf. Sam Thang 1961: 29; Tep Yok & Thao Kun 1967: 36).

Sakalabhāvūpanīyakamm [saʔkalphiəvuupaʔniijəkam] (< Sk., Pā. *sakala* 'consisting of parts, divisible, material; possessing all its component parts, complete, entire, whole, all' + Sk., Pā. *bhāva* 'state, condition, nature, shape, aspect, way, manner, fashion' + Sk., Pā. *upanīya* 'having brought near' + *kamm*) 'globalization' (cf. Hing Thoraxy & Hean Sahib 2003: 333).

Sevākamm [se:βa:kam] (< Skt., Pā. *sevā* 'service' (Skt., Pā.) + *kamm*) 'service' (the word *sevā* is attested in dictionaries prior to 1975, but the compound *sevākamm* seems more recent).

-vidyā 'knowledge, science' (Sk.)

Bartamānavidyā [pɔʔdəmniə-βiʔtthjiə] (< Skt. *vartamāna* (> *bartamān*) 'existing' (has the meaning of 'news, information' in modern Khmer) + *vidyā*) 'computer science' (cf. Lidee Khmer 1998: 141) (calque of Fr. *informatique*).

Jātibandhuvidyā [ciəʔpəntuʔ-βiʔtthjiə] (< Skt., Pā. *jāti* 'birth, family, caste, species' + Skt., Pā. *bandhu* 'relation, relationship; kinsman' + *vidyā*) 'ethnology' (cf. Sam Thang 1961: 329; Tep Yok & Thao Kun 1967: 476).

Naravidyā [nɔ:reəʔ-βiʔtthjiə] (< Skt., Pā. *nara* 'man' + *vidyā*) 'anthropology' (cf. Sam Thang 1961: 39; Tep Yok & Thao Kun 1967: 46).

Sūravidyā [so:βiʔtthjiə] (< Skt. *svara* 'sound' + *vidyā*) 'phonetics' (cf. Lidee Khmer 1998: 215).

Sthānanānavidyā [səʔthə:n-niə-βiʔtthjiə], *ṭhānanānavidyā* [thə:n-niə-βiʔtthjiə] (< Skt. *sthāna*, Pā. *ṭhāna* 'place' + Skt., Pā. *nāma* 'name' + *vidyā*) 'toponymy' (cf. Sam Thang 1961: 834; Tep Yok & Thao Kun 1967: 1281).

Balaratṭhavidyā [pəlləʔət-βiʔtthjiə] (< Sk. Pā. *bala* 'power, strength, might, vigour, force, validity; military force, troops, army' + Pā. *raṭṭha* 'country' (> *balaratṭha* 'people, citizens, population of state') + *vidyā*) 'civic education' (cf. Lidee Khmer 1998: 142) (which replaces *sīladharm nayopāy* [səlləʔə-ɲə:βa:i], 'political morality,' one of the modules taught at school in the 1980s).

-*sāstr* ‘teaching, treaty’ (Sk. *śāstra*)

Ebīṭemīsāstr [ʔe:pi:de:mi:sah] (< Fr. *épidémie* + *sāstr*) for ‘epidemiology’ (this word is not yet recorded in dictionaries and lexicons, but is found in recent articles on HIV/AIDS).

It is to be noted that *-sāstr(a)* is much less used than *-vidyā* in this sense.

Sūrasātr [so:sah] (< Skt. *svara* + *sāstr*) for ‘phonetics.’

Jan- or *-jan-* ‘folk, people, person, being, human being’ (Sk., Pā.)

Pakkhajan [paʔkə-cun] (< Pā. *pakkha* ‘part, side’ + *jan*) ‘party member, title used during the regime of the People’s Republic of Cambodia in the 1980s.’

Jan bhīes khluon [cun-phiəh-khluən] (< *jan* + *bhīes khluon* ‘to flee, to escape’) ‘refugee’ (cf. Lidee Khmer 1998: 53). In dictionaries prior to 1975, the compound is *qnak bhīes khluon* [neaʔ-phiəh-khluən].

Sakammajan [saʔkammə-cun] (< Pāli *sakamma* ‘one’s own occupation, active’ + *jan*) for ‘activist of a political party’ (recent word).

-kar ‘hand, maker’

Bidhīkar [piʔthiʔka:] (< Skt., Pā. *vidhi* (> *bidhī*) ‘form, way, rule’ + *kar*) for ‘master of ceremonies, emcee’ (on the model of *bidhīkār* [piʔthiʔka:] ‘protocol’).

Balakar [pullə-kə:] (< Skt., Pā. *bala* ‘force’ + *kar*) for ‘soldier, labourer, worker, proletarian’ as in *balakar ka prām* [pullə-kə:kə:pram] ‘people who were designated by the then-Cambodian government to go and clear the forest at the Khmer-Thai border in the mid-eighties.’

-aka; -ika; -ita

The relationship between people who do the action and those who receive it necessitates the use of different Indic suffixes. The following examples are attested in the Khmer dictionary of the Institut Bouddhique (1967-1968).

Nāyak [niəjuəʔ] ‘director’ (< Skt., Pā. *Nī-* ‘to lead, guide’ + *-aka* ‘agentive suffix’) (the feminine is *nāyikā*).
Yācak [jiəcaʔ] ‘beggar’ (< Skt., Pā. *YĀC-* ‘to ask, beg’ + *-aka*).

Dāyak [tiəjuəʔ] ‘benefactor, donor, grantor’ (< Skt., Pā. *DĀ(Y)-* ‘to give, offer, present, deliver’ + *-aka*) (the feminine is *dāyikā*).

Niyojak [niʔju:cuaʔ] ‘employer’ (< Skt., Pā. *ni-YUJ-* ‘to appoint’ + *-aka*).

Niyojit [niʔju:cit] ‘employee’ (< Skt., Pā. *ni-YUJ-* ‘to appoint’ + *-ita* ‘past participle’).

Samājik [sa:mə:ciʔ] ‘member’ (the feminine is *samājikā*), *puggalik* [ʔəʔkə:liʔ] ‘staff, personal,’
buddhasāsanik [putsahsəniʔ] ‘Buddhist’ ...

a- ‘Negative prefix in Skt. and Pā.’

Anītiratṭh [ʔaʔni:teʔrəat] (< *a* + *nīti* ‘law, rule, statute, regulation, right, conduct’ + *ratṭha* ‘state, nation, population’) ‘state, nation without law (French: *État de non-droit*).’

V. Morphological and compounding process

As we said, the Khmer morphological process of affixation is still used.

Pamphduh [ʔamphtuh] (< [phtuh] ‘to explode’) ‘to make explode’ (refers to suicide bombing) (recent neologism).

Tamlābhāb [dəmla:phiəp] ([dəmla:] ‘transparency’ < [thla:] ‘transparent’) ‘transparency.’

Rapak gamhoēn [rəʔə:ʔ-kumhə:ɲ] ([rəʔə:ʔ] < [rə:ʔ] ‘to look for’ + [kumhə:ɲ] < [khə:ɲ] ‘to find’) ‘discovery’

(created by the Khmerization Committee). There is also an alternative: *kār rak-khoeñ* [ka:-rə:ʔkhə:ɲ] (< *kār* + [rə:ʔ] ‘to look for’ + [khə:ɲ] ‘to find’) ‘discovery,’ which is less formal.

It seems that this system was fully revived by the Permanent Khmerization National Committee in the mid-1960s when secondary education was in the process of being taught in the national and official language, *i.e.* Khmer, replacing French. This Committee actually tried to avoid compounds with prefix words such as *kār* ‘act, action, affair,’ *sec-ktī* ‘affair, matter, case,’ *qnak* ‘person,’ *praṭāp* ‘tool, instrument’ and so on:

Camñāt ‘*thnāk*’ [camnat-thnaʔ] rather than *kār cāt* ‘*thnāk*’ [ka:-cat-thnaʔ] ‘classification.’

Tamrūv *kār* [dɑmɾəv-ka:] rather than *kār trūv* *kār* [ka:-trəv-ka:] ‘need (n).’

Khmoet *slāp*’ [khmaət-slap] rather than *qnak koet* *slāp*’ [neəʔ-kaət-slap] ‘stillborn baby.’

Lmūn [ləmu:n] rather than *satv lūn* [sat-lu:n] ‘reptile.’

Khūr [khno:] rather than *praṭāp*’ *kūr* [praṭāp-ko:] ‘stirring stick.’

Although, some of the infixational words did not survive, this decision had a tremendous impact surviving the disappearance of the Institute of Khmerization in 1975, as it is common now for Cambodian scholars and journalists to create new words based on this morphological process.

If affixation seems most likely to be passive, compounding is not. Popular word formations such as *radeh* *bhloen* [rətəh-phlə:ɲ] ‘train’ ([rətəh] ‘cart’ + [phlə:ɲ] ‘fire’), *dū* *dik* *kak* [tu:-tiʔka:ʔ] ‘fridge’ ([tu:] ‘closet’ + [tiʔ] ‘water’ + [ka:ʔ] ‘to freeze’), successfully created to replace some French words in the past, are still in use, *e.g.* *gūth* *bīnbān* [ku:t-pi:ɲpiəɲ] ([ku:t] ‘excrement, buttocks’ + [pi:ɲpiəɲ] ‘spider’) ‘diapers’ ([dɑ:ɲ-pɜ:] is also heard however). So besides the Khmer infix [-m-] and the Indic suffix *-jan* denoting both the human agent of the action of the verb (comparable to English *-er* as in *doer*, *smoker* ...), recourse to compounding is, with the help of *qnak*, very common whether it is a loan translation or not, *e.g.* *qnak nām* *bāky* [neəʔ-nɑam-piəʔ] ([neəʔ] ‘people’ + [nɑam] ‘to guide’ + [piəʔ] ‘speech, words’) for ‘spokesperson,’ *qnak vibhāg* *nayopāy* [neəʔ-βiʔphiəʔ-nə:ju:βa:i] ([neəʔ] ‘people’ + [βiʔphiəʔ] ‘to analyze’ + [nə:ju:βa:i] ‘politics’) ‘political analyst.’

Here are some other compound nouns:

Siddhi *jrak* *kon* *nayopāy* [sət-crə:ʔkaən-nə:ju:βa:i] ([sət] ‘right’ + [crə:ʔkaən] ‘to be under the aegis of someone, live with someone, a protégé of someone’ + [nə:ju:βa:i] ‘politics’) for ‘political asylum.’

Grun *phtāsāy* *paksī* [krun-phdāhsa:i-βaʔsəi] ([krun-phdāhsa:i] ‘flu’ + [βaʔsəi] ‘bird’) for ‘bird flu.’

Lān *huy* *kakhvok*’ [liəɲ-lu:ɲ-kakhβaʔ] ([liəɲ] ‘to wash’ + [lu:ɲ] ‘money’ + [kakhβaʔ] ‘ugly’) for ‘laundered money.’

Kār *roes-oen* *phlūv* *bhed* [ka:rəhʔaəɲ-phləvphr:t] ([ka:rəhʔaəɲ] ‘discrimination’ + [phləvphr:t] ‘sex’) for ‘sexual discrimination.’

As shown, Khmer uses the “same” processes to create new words as those noted by Martini four decades ago. In a big change to these word-creation processes in Khmer, Khmer switches from French loanwords to English ones (process II), and the latter become more and more common. This shows that Khmer-English bilingualism has increased notably. English loanwords are sometimes in conflict with words created from Indic sources. The two processes “loan” and “Indic” are the principal sources and they occur parallel to each other. Most of the Indic bound suffixes cited by Martini, which I have mentioned again in process IV, are nativized.

Now, how do institutions react to all these changes? Not only do institutions or government personnel not have any policy to stop the flow of excessive use of English loanwords, but they themselves also deliberately use English loanwords in law and official letters (Chhieng Vibol 2004). There is no committee in charge of controlling the use of vocabulary. Journalists and translators have freedom to create new words. Some purists (*fn* 4) criticize all use of English words in the language. They try their best to find a solution. However, what they propose is to go back to Indic sources: words that already existed with a meaning more or less similar to the English ones or words that are newly created. Indic words were not all welcomed by the Khmer because of their length and their unusual reading rules in Khmer.

The study of Khmer neologisms could provide information about and help us understand current social development, in particular how Cambodians view their own language. This is also valid regarding the recent reform of Khmer spelling.

Finally, all words cited in this paper are absent or at least lacking an entry for their meaning in word process I, in the *Vacanānukram Khmaer*. This does not absolutely mean that they had not been created by then, but rather that their usage was not common. As seen, some words were created by the *Commission Culturelle*, though they were not commonly used at that period. Now, as the need arises, we start using some old words and delving into ancient sources. In any case, the most recent edition of the authoritative Khmer dictionary goes back to 1968. The language has greatly changed, not necessarily in terms of processes, but in the number of lexical items during these last decades. There is a lot of work to do in this field.

NOTES

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1. Some earlier scholars (including Martini himself, and Nacaskul 1962) claimed that Khmer affixation stopped being active or purely and simply died off. Lewitz (1968: 121) rejected this hypothesis and argued that Khmer affixation is not dead as can be seen in some recent Khmer neologisms, *e.g.* by infixation *trañ* [tra:ŋ] > *tañrañ* [dāmra:ŋ] ‘to filter’ > ‘filter.’ It then gives rise to the compounds *krañās tañrañ* [kradah-dāmra:ŋ] ‘filter paper,’ *tañrañ nom* [dāmra:ŋ-nu:m] ‘kidney;’ by prefixation *suddh* [sət] ‘pure’ (Pā. *suddha*, Skt. *śuddha*) > *pansuddh* [ḥansət] ‘to purify’. I will return to this point in my discussion of “process V.”

2. This prefix [cə-] in *jajuh* serves to denote ‘repetition’ as in other numerous Khmer words: *papos* [ḥaḥaḥ] ‘to sweep, brush, shake (off) repeatedly,’ *dadah* [təteah] ‘to beat, flap the wings repeatedly,’ *kakāy* [kaka:i] ‘to scratch repeatedly (like a chicken).’

3. The alternate employment of some French and English words is indicative of this transitional period, *e.g.* [si:-da:] ~ [ʔet] (*sida* ~ *aids*), [ʔa:ʔ-di:-na:-tɜ:] ~ [khəm-phju:-thɜ:] (*ordinateur* ~ *computer*) and the like.

4. Many words are used by bilinguals and could potentially become borrowings such as [ḥri:k-fəh] ‘breakfast,’ [di:n-nə:] ‘dinner,’ etc. Some Khmer purists are aware of the excessive use of English words and severely criticize it. However, they alternatively propose words of Indic origin such as *pātarās* [ḥat-taʔ-rah] (Pā. *pātarāsa* ‘morning meal, breakfast’), and *sāyamās* [sayaʔ-mah] (Pā. *sāyamāsa* ‘evening meal, dinner’) (Chhieng Vibol 2003). These words are unknown by the Khmer themselves because they are too elegant or literary, even well-educated people ignore them. We seem likely to turn back to the old problem of the 1950s when Khmer scholars then used/created long words from Indic source, and ordinary people had difficulty pronouncing and remembering them. There is also another practice of English-usage practice, the phonetic transcription of companies, store names and shop signs. This practice is scandalous in the eyes of the same purists (Chhieng Vibol 2004).

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