A Comparison of the Numeral Classification of Humans in Mon–Khmer

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1. Introduction

A reviewing human classification systems in the numeral phrase in Mon–Khmer languages reveals a diversity of styles and forms. Humans can be grouped in a single separate category or, in a more elaborate system, in several separate categories which grade people according to social and religious considerations. They may also be classified together with other animates, or they may be grouped with non-living objects. The alternative of leaving humans uncategorized in the numeral classifier system does not appear to be an option in any of the data analyzed here.

Of the above three styles, the first, grouping humans in a separate category, emerges as the dominant pattern. Only Angku in the Palaungic branch does not have such a category. Also several of the languages from the eight branches of Mon–Khmer described here—Khasi, Palaungic, Monic, Khmer, Khmuic, Katuic, Bahnaric and Viet–Mường—have elaborated categories for humans. Many of the numeral classifier morphemes for these human categories are native, and some of the classifier morphemes are formed by infixing, a process unique to Mon–Khmer

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1 This paper was originally to be part of Papers from the Helsingør Symposium on Austroasiatic Linguistics and Literature, MKS 18–19. I would like to thank Jan–Olof Svantesson for the original work he did on that collection and David Thomas for allowing me the time to do revisions and to submit this article to a later issue of Mon–Khmer Studies. Many people have aided me in the location and interpretation of information here. I would like to thank Alton L. Becker, Paul Benedict, and William J. Gedney. A special thanks goes to Gérard Diffloth and David Strecke.

2 When the classification of humans is related to the social and religious considerations of a community, changes in the community’s social structure can be expected to have consequences for the related lexicon. Some of the work reported on here draws from data collected close to 100 years ago. For example, some of the research on Palaungic languages and Mon was published in the early 1900’s. Other work on Khmu, Vietnamese and Palaungic was published in the 1950’s. Most of the work comes from data published in the 60’s and 70’s and often collected prior to and during the Americans’ involvement in Vietnam. The continuing social and political upheavals in the Southeast Asian area from the time of the Vietnam War can be expected to have some effect on classification systems for humans in general and even on the very status, use and existence of the languages in question.

3 A possible example of humans being uncategorized is found in Tai Loi: Samtau–Waic [Palaungic]. Scott (1900) reports only the number and noun slot being filled in the example ‘three men’). However, this is not proof that humans are unclassified. It is always possible that the classifier for ‘men’ is a repeater and that it was omitted in this context. In other Palaungic languages there are several classifier morphemes for humans that can classify themselves as nouns.

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in the Southeast Asian area. However, even though there is widespread classification of humans in the Mon–Khmer subfamily, only a few of the classifier words, native or not, are shared across or even within the branches of Mon–Khmer.

(See the appendix for a list of the Mon–Khmer languages analyzed here.)

2. General Human Classifiers

In Khasi, data from Standard Khasi and from the Wăr (Amwi) dialect show that the two varieties of Khasi use different morphemes for the same human category: Standard Khasi ngut and Wăr be-rbe. The meanings of these two forms remain unknown from the available data, and they do not function as classifiers in other Mon–Khmer languages. The exact range of their usage varies by speaker, some willing to include spirits, angels, devils and ghosts in this category with humans and some not.

In the Palaungic branch, the numeral classifier morphemes for counting humans are found throughout the Waic subbranch and in other Austroasiatic languages and are all probably native forms with the exception of the classifier in Angku to be described below. While the Palaungic languages and dialects employ native Austroasiatic lexical items, the sixteen languages and dialects employ five different forms. The Angku languages Amok and U, located in the east of the Palaungic area, both use the same classifier morpheme i, meaning ‘man, human being’. It occurs throughout the northern group of Mon–Khmer languages meaning ‘human’ or ‘woman’, and it occurs in Khmer and Katu as a grammatical marker and in the Aslian subfamily as a definite article. In Monglwe, another Angku language, the classifier morpheme, kwtn, means ‘father’ throughout Waic and is also attested in Nicobarese meaning ‘husband/male animal’.

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4 Much of the data reported on here comes from a broader study described in Adams (1989) for the Mon–Khmer, Aslian and Nicobarese subfamilies of Austroasiatic. Of the 59 languages and dialects looked at there, only three Mon–Khmer languages did not have some recorded classifiers. These languages are Pear (Pearic), the only representative of the Pearic branch for which I had data, Riang and Davies’ Puman (Palaungic). The records for these three languages are meager and classifiers may have been missed. Their not being recorded in these cases may also be accounted for by the fact that classifiers are optional in some Mon–Khmer languages in some styles of speaking. For example, Shorto (1979, p.c.) reports that his fieldwork on Riang showed that it did have classifiers and that a specific set of numbers went with them. Until better data are obtained these few examples without classifiers in the number phrase mean little.

This study differs from the 1989 one in several ways. First, new sources for Khmer, Vietnamese and Mtvông are included. The new Mtvông data, drawn from a study published in 1987 by Russian linguists, demonstrate a rich system for classifying humans. The new work on Khmer (Marston, 1988) gives us some idea of the changes that took place after the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia. The discussion of the classification systems has been also been reinterpreted and refined here.

5 To claim that all these forms classify ordinary people may be inaccurate. In several of the languages, Davies’ Wa, La, En, and Wa Kengtung, the only example was with the word ‘man’ and especially in the case of Monglwe where the classifier means ‘father’, it may be that the classifiers are restricted to usage with human males. However, in the other languages besides Monglwe the classifiers have a general meaning, so I have made the assumption that they apply more widely to all sorts of people.
A third form, *kiʔ (Proto–Waic) meaning ‘man, body’, is found in all the northern Palaungic languages except La. These northern languages include Gold Palaung, En, Son, Wa–Kengtung, Drage’s Wa, Davies’ Wa, Antisdel’s Wa and Kawa. In La, one finds a fourth form, p’i, reconstructed in Diffloth (1977) as Proto–Waic *biʔ and glossed as ‘person’.

The southern Lawa group of the Palaungic branch, consisting of the Bo Luang, Umphai and Mae Sariang dialects share a fifth classifier, pui. This form is reconstructed in Diffloth (1977) as Proto–Waic *bry meaning ‘person’.

Of the five classifier morphemes found in the Palaungic languages only one of them, *kiʔ, functions as a classifier somewhere else in a Mon–Khmer branch. Mon also employs it as a classifier for humans in general, and in spoken Mon it is a polite term of address between people of equal status (Shorto 1962: 17).

In the Khmuic branch, the northern and southern dialects of Khmu employ a different classifier morpheme for humans from the one found in Mal. The Khmu dialects, as with many of its classifiers (see Adams 1989, 1991), have borrowed the form gon for classifying people from Lao or other Tai languages. Mal, on the other hand, has the form long that has no identifiable cognates in the available data.

The general classifier for humans in pre-revolutionary Khmer is different again from the forms in the four other branches described above. This form, neak, is of indeterminate origin, although it is frequently attributed to a Chamic borrowing of a wider-spread Austronesian cognate. In Rhade, for example, anak is a noun meaning among other things ‘offspring, child’. The morpheme does not function as a classifier in Austronesian though it is employed in Austronesian to make compounds or for purposes of nominalization. The Austronesian origin is disputed by Gedney (1986, p.c.) who believes that “some day epigraphic evidence within early Khmer, or else comparative evidence” will prove the word native Mon–Khmer.

The Khmer classifier resembles, but is probably not related to, the classifier for humans which occurs within both the Katuic and Bahnaric branches. The form naʔ occurs in Koho Sre [S. Bahnaric], and in Kui, Brou, Pacoh, and Katu [Katuic]. Its origin can probably be attributed to the infixation and initial syllable reduction of the native cognate chak. The clue to this identification comes from the form of the human classifier in Kantu, another Katuic dialect. The classifier morpheme in Kantu is chanak, the infixed version of *cak which means ‘body’ (Proto–East Katuic [D.M. Thomas 1967: 73]). In Katu proper this form is chak or achak (Costello 1971: 28), and it is infixed by the -an- infix found throughout Mon–Khmer. The morpheme chak is found only in Bahnaric and Katuic, according to Diffloth (1982, p.c.).

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6 Davies (1909) gives shi as a classifier for humans in Gold Palaung. It is unlike all the other forms found in the Rumai and Waic subbranches. Since I know the reliability of Milne’s data (1921), I am including only her forms.

7 Another interesting feature of the chanak form is that the non–infixed root, chak, is also a classifier in Kui [Katuic], but it is used for tubers, not humans. It is not unusual in Mon–Khmer for the same lexical item to classify quite different phenomena in different languages. This is true for example for the mât cognate which is an honorific classifier for humans in Bahnar, but used with portions of medicine in Mon.
While Koho Sre [S. Bahnaric] employs the same morpheme for classifying humans as the Katuic languages do, the rest of the Bahnaric languages employ a variety of other forms. (See Table 1.) The North, East, Central and West sub-branches of Bahnaric have basically one classifier per subbranch. The Southern subbranch, including Koho Sre described above, has several different forms.

The North Bahnaric languages, except for Jeh, all share a cognate which is reconstructed by Diffloth (1982, p.c.) as *ngaay. Diffloth gives its meaning as ‘pupil of the eye’, but in the Sedang data it is glossed as ‘person’. The classifier in Jeh, ?nau, is not related to the other North Bahnaric form, which according to Thomas and Smith (1967) has the cognate mangay in Jeh. (The meaning of this cognate in Jeh is ‘the one having eyes’ [Diffloth, 1982, p.c.]) It is also possible that the *ngaay cognate is related to the Vietnamese and Muong human classifier nguôi, which also means ‘person’ and can function as a pronoun as the form does in Sedang.

In Cua, an East Bahnaric language, we find a different form functioning as the human classifier. The form dro in Cua is also used in some of the dialects of Bahnar proper [Central Bahnaric] not as a classifier, but as a noun meaning ‘person, individual’.

Bahnar proper, of the Central Bahnaric group, also has a unique classifier meaning ‘person’, nu. It is not possible to establish any cognates for it from the available data. The Rongao dialect of Central Bahnar uses the same form as most of the North Bahnaric languages described above, ngai. This different form is explained by the fact that the speakers of this dialect have a northern origin.

The classifier *raa? which occurs in the West Bahnaric languages Brao, Ôi, and Loven is from a noun meaning ‘big, adult human’, which has cognates in other Austroasiatic languages but does not function as a classifier in any of them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>person</th>
<th>ghost/spirit</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>one</td>
<td>two or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>ngai</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sedang (Smith 1967, 1975)</td>
<td>ngè</td>
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<tr>
<td>Halang (Cooper 1971)</td>
<td>ngai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeh (Cohen 1976)</td>
<td>?nau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrê (Treblioc, Treblico and Nghia 1974)</td>
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<td>Cua (Dô, Môc and Maier 1974)</td>
<td>dơ</td>
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<tr>
<td>East dialects</td>
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<td>West dialects except Rôngao</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>ngai</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Brao (Keller 1976)</td>
<td>raa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Òi</td>
<td>râ</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mnong Preh (Phillips and Kpor 1974)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Mnong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mnong Rolom (Voegelin and Voegelin 1966)</td>
<td>naw</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mnong Gar (Condominas 1977)</td>
<td>neh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kơho Sre (Manley 1972 and Drouin n.d.)*</td>
<td>naʔ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrau (Thomas and Luc 1966, Thomas 1971)</td>
<td>mvu</td>
<td>ndu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Form as cited in Manley.

**Table 1. Bahnaric classifiers for humans**

The languages in the South Bahnaric subbranch, as mentioned above, do not share a classifier for humans but have several different ones. Stieng and Chrau inflect the classifiers for number. The two forms for classifying a single person, *mbu* in Stieng and *mvu* in Chrau, appear to have an *m*-prefix which very likely has as its meaning ‘one’. Most of the words for ‘one’ in Mon–Khmer start with *m*- and in Katu and Khmer an *m*-prefix form of ‘one’ is attested. The classifier for more than one person is *ndu* in Chrau and *du* in Stieng.

The other South Bahnaric languages have a variety of forms for human classification. The Kơho Sre form is *naʔ*, cognate to the form found in the Katuic languages which are further north in Vietnam. The Mnong Preh [Central Mnong] form *nuyh* appears to be a borrowed form reconstructed as *mnus* from Sanskrit *manusa* meaning ‘man, person’. The Mnong Rolom and Mnong Gar [Eastern
Mnong] languages have forms unrelated to each other and probably unrelated to any of the forms found elsewhere (naw and neh respectively). Of the six languages in South Bahnaric described here only two share the same classifier morpheme for counting humans.

In the furthest east branch of Mon–Khmer, Viet–Muông, the two languages for which data were available, Vietnamese and Muông, use the same classifier for counting people in general. This classifier nguoi means ‘person’ and originally ‘eye’ and has cognates in Proto–Palaungic as *lngaay meaning ‘eye’. Both these forms may be related to the classifier mentioned earlier in North Bahnaric.

A description of the Angku [Palaungic] language has been left for last since it represents the one language in a Mon–Khmer branch without a separate category for humans. In Angku both humans and animals are classified by the form to. This form most likely is also a borrowing, and it resembles the forms found in Gold Palaung and in other Palaungic languages for animals which are borrowed from Tai languages. However, this form could have another source besides Tai, possibly Chinese or Miao-Yao. David Strecker (1980, p.c.) reports the following problems in identifying the origin of this form.

Manomaivibool (1976: 180) suggests that the tua classifier for animals [in Thai] is a word that ‘might have been borrowed from Chinese in Han times.’ The putative Chinese etymon is *dou (with the p’ing tone).

This is similar to forms given as ‘animal (classifier)’ [in Miao-Yao] in Purnell (1970: Appendix: 7). Purnell lists two cognate sets which he glosses “animal (clf.)” The first set is: Cheng Feng -teq and Hua Yuan -teq. These are both Miao dialects in Kueichau and Hunan … Purnell reconstructs the form in Proto–Miao as *te, with tone B, vowel uncertain.

Purnell’s other cognate set consists of forms from three Iu Mien dialects and one Kin Mun dialect, that is from the two languages which constitute Yao … Purnell’s Proto–Yao is tau². Apparently the tone of the Proto–Yao form does not correspond to the tone of the Proto–Miao form so Purnell has to set up two separate cognate sets.

Moreover, it would appear that the Hmong [a Miao language] classifier tus (pronounced [tuː] with low level tone) ‘classifier for cylindrical objects including people and other animals’ is not cognate with either Cheng Feng teq etc., or with Proto–Yao *tau². For one thing the tones do not match up.

As Strecker notes, it is difficult to know if any relationship among the Chinese, Tai and Miao–Yao forms exists. A Mon–Khmer classifier for animals of the following phonological shapes, to, tu, tau, tua, could have come from any one of a number of sources. In Angku, while the classifier form resembles the other to forms in Palaungic, the items the Angku classifier classifies are similar to those in Hmong or Chinese which count both humans and animals.

While all languages in Mon–Khmer except Angku [Palaungic] have a separate classifier for humans, this does not represent a system peculiar to Mon–Khmer or more generally to Austroasiatic. The Aslian and Nicobarese languages also have separate categories for humans (Adams 1989). This style of classification is extremely common and has been described for other Asian languages in Adams and Conklin (1973).
3. Elaborated Human Classifiers

In the data available for this study, the number of languages reported to have elaborated systems were considerably fewer than those with general classifiers for humans. Essentially all the languages with numeral classifier systems had examples of the latter, while only eight had elaborated systems. These include Drage’s Wa, Gold Palaung and Lawa [Palaungic], Khmer, Mon, Bahnar proper [Central Bahnaric] and Vietnamese and Mường [Viet–Mường]. In some cases, this lack of proliferation of human classifiers seems surprising. For example, it seems surprising among the northern and southern varieties of Khmu who have so freely borrowed from Lao and other Tai languages for much of their classifier system. In some other cases, for example in Palaungic and Bahnaric, the small size of the classifier samples may mean that the data collector missed additional forms that may exist. But in general this type of expansion of the classifier set is not common in Mon–Khmer, and when it occurs it is sometimes the result of social influence from outside the native culture. As with the general human classifiers, the elaborated systems for humans show little resemblance to each other, except for those languages that belong to the same branch. There is no sharing of forms across branches.

In Palaungic, the elaborated systems in Gold Palaung and Drage’s Wa and Lawa are all based on religious notions. The Lawa form is from Tai languages. The overarching organizing semantic principle in the Gold Palaung and Drage’s Wa systems appears to be the dimension that Becker (1975) proposed for Burmese: ‘distance from Buddha’. These two systems were most likely borrowed from Burmese via Shan. (See Table 2.)

The existence of these elaborated classifiers is a linguistic manifestation of a changing cultural situation. As described in LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave (1964: 125-6), the Gold Palaung have adopted Buddhism, as well as other customs, from the Shan and Burmese. Buddhism has replaced, or perhaps co-exists to some degree, with an animistic religion which other Mon–Khmer cultures have retained.8

The Gold Palaung and Drage’s Wa classifiers come from the same source, Shan and/or Burmese. Information on culture contact in LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave (1964: 125-6) indicates that if they were borrowed from Burmese, it would have happened sometime after 1780. However, if they were borrowed from Shan which borrowed them from Burmese, it could have been two or three centuries earlier. The Shan source seems a likely candidate, but it may be that Burmese has been a secondary source, which might explain the existence of both sū and chū in Gold Palaung. These forms are phonologically similar and also overlap in the set of nouns they classify. LeBar, Hickey, and Musgrave report that at the time of their writing monks of the central area (where Gold Palaung is spoken) went to Mandalay and Rangoon for training. They were bound to be influenced by Burmese language and culture and may have been a source for the introduction of new forms.

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8 It is conceivable that the strategy of borrowing classifiers for these non-native religious divisions while maintaining a native one for humans in general allowed some maintenance of the animistic native world view. Other categories of human, animal and religious divisions in the lexicon might better demonstrate this.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lawa</th>
<th>Drage's Wa</th>
<th>Gold Palaung</th>
<th>Shan</th>
<th>Burmese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hsu</td>
<td>pagoda</td>
<td>shu²</td>
<td>hsu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chū</td>
<td>Buddha's image, pagoda</td>
<td>deities,</td>
<td>Buddha, relics,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Buddha's image, pagoda, halo, riverbank</td>
<td>pagoda</td>
<td>images, law,</td>
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<tr>
<td>ton monk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ton¹</td>
<td>deities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pa</td>
<td>priest</td>
<td>paa⁴</td>
<td>deities, saints,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p'ā king, king's image</td>
<td>clergymen,</td>
<td>monks, royalty</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>rulers,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>religious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>precepts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>pui human</td>
<td>kāu</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>phu³</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>human, doll</td>
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<td>status, teachers,</td>
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<td>kə⁵</td>
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<td>people</td>
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</table>

Table 2. Sources of human classifiers in Palaungic

The tripartite division of the world that Milne’s Gold Palaung speaker presented is very orderly. The native Mon–Khmer form *ki?* for ordinary people works very well with the borrowed *sū, chū* and *p’ā*. Each of the classifiers serves to distinguish one type of being and the images and artifacts associated with this type. In accord with the ‘image’ concept, *sū/chū* classifies Buddha and associated images, *p’ā* classifies kings and their images, and *kū* (*ki?*) classifies people and their images, dolls. An animate meaning is central to all of these categories even though inanimate items are contained in them. In addition, in Gold Palaung, *tō* classifies animals and related images, just as in Shan, and is the furthest point from Buddha.

In the *sū/chū* class, the inclusion of ‘pagoda’ in a class with images of Buddha appears due to the use of these buildings for religious purposes. *Chū* in addition classifies halos and river banks. Halos are associated with deities in Asian cultures just as they are in Western religions. However, the motivation for the inclusion of river banks is not obvious and has no parallels in Shan or Burmese. The existence of another classifier for river banks in Gold Palaung, *klōng*, also Burmese in origin, makes counting river banks by *chū* even more puzzling.

The form found in Lawa for monks is also borrowed from some Tai language and is another example of a style of elaboration that singles out religious people for special consideration.

The pre-revolutionary Khmer elaborated system has also been influenced by Buddhist culture, but the classifier morphemes are quite different, as are the items counted by the classifiers in the Khmer system. For example, the concept of ‘image’ and the consequential inclusion of inanimate items is not found in pre-revo-
lutionary Khmer. Basically the Khmer system distinguishes people with royal and religious status from all others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.</th>
<th>image of Buddha</th>
<th>clergy/monk</th>
<th>royalty</th>
<th>person</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacob 1965, 1968</td>
<td></td>
<td>?ong (k)</td>
<td>preāh-?ong(k)</td>
<td>neāk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huffman 1970</td>
<td></td>
<td>qang</td>
<td>preāh-qang</td>
<td>neāq</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headley 1977</td>
<td></td>
<td>?ang</td>
<td></td>
<td>neak</td>
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<td>Ehrman 1972</td>
<td></td>
<td>òng</td>
<td></td>
<td>neʔ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Maspero 1915</td>
<td></td>
<td>an</td>
<td></td>
<td>nak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorgoniev 1966</td>
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<th>high persons</th>
<th>dignitaries</th>
<th>superior honor</th>
<th>inferior honor</th>
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<td>loukk</td>
<td>hupan-pan</td>
<td>hupan</td>
<td>hupāk</td>
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<td>Jacob 1965, 1968</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>statue/image</th>
<th>shape/form</th>
<th>monk</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jacob 1965, 1968</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorgoniev 1966</td>
<td>x (writer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Maspero 1915</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehrman 1972</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headley 1977</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV. tuːː</th>
<th>person</th>
<th>letter of alphabet</th>
<th>character in play</th>
<th>upright object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacob 1965, 1968</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headley 1977</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Pre–revolutionary Khmer classifiers for deities, humans and related inanimates.

As can be seen from Table 3, the different sources for pre-revolutionary Khmer report the system slightly differently. All sources agree on the classifier for people in general. It is over the use of two classifiers for royalty and clergy that there is disagreement. These latter two classifiers are related to each other; one is the single morpheme ?ong(k), the other is the same form compounded with preāh meaning ‘sacred’. Three sources, Headley et al. (1977), Maspero (1915) and Ehrman (1972), report only the classifier ?ong(k), while Gorgoniev (1966) reports only the preāh-?ong(k) form. In these sources, regardless of which classifier they report, royalty, monks, and sometimes images of Buddha are all counted by the one form. Jacob (1965) and Huffman (1970) report both forms. In these two systems, the two forms distinguish royalty from clergy, with the royalty being called ‘sacred’. Finally Jenner and Pou (1980-81: 284-5) give preāh as a ‘generic headword for beings and objects conceived as divine or royal’; however, they do not give this morpheme or ?ong(k) as a numeral classifier.

As with the Palaung language, dimensions of relative sanctity would be the most appropriate for describing the relationship among the classifiers in Section I of Table 3. Interestingly enough it is possible for certain nonholy people to be off this scale in some speakers’ classification systems. For example, Maspero (1915)
reports that thieves are not classified by nêk and hence not by the other forms either. However, Headley et al. (1977) do report examples of this particular usage.

Except for the images of Buddha, the pre-revolutionary Khmer system listed in Section I does not include any of the kinds of inanimate items that are found in the Gold Palaung categories, although the concept of person plus related images does appear in the categories created by rûp and tûo described in Sections III & IV of Table 3. These two classifiers count people according to the notion of image as opposed to reality and include a number of inanimate items in their classes. The rûp form here is meant not for classifying real people, but for items which are somehow an abstraction or perhaps even a caricature. As with the ūong(k) classifier, different sources report rûp and tûo as classifying different items. Jacob (1965) gives the most restricted list for rûp and cites it for counting ‘people from a philosophical view and characters in books’. Ehrman (1972) and Headley et al. (1977) on the other hand have it as classifying ‘pictures, images, shapes and statues’ as well. Rûp is a borrowing from Sanskrit/Pali meaning ‘image’ and has in Khmer been retained as a noun with this meaning.

Headley et al. (1977) is the only source that gives rûp as referring to monks. The classification of monks here is unclear unless in some sense monks are thought of as “images of god”. Unfortunately, Headley et al. do not give data clarifying when one might employ ūong(k) for monks as opposed to using rûp.

Only Jacob (1965) and Headley et al. (1977) report the classification of people or images of people by tûo. As a noun it means ‘body’, ‘figures’, ‘character or part in a play’. Headley et al. (1977) report it as counting only characters in plays and letters of the alphabet. Jacob (1965) reports it as also employed for upright objects and persons. There are obvious relationships among the concepts ‘body’, ‘upright’, ‘figure’, ‘symbol’, ‘written’ and ‘plays’. Ehrman (1972) also cites this classifier but as a way of counting cars. The expression ‘a car body’ has parallels even with English; however, this particular usage does not seem to fit well with the other functions of tûo.

Maspero’s list of classifiers contains additional forms for dignitaries and other ‘high’ persons not found elsewhere. One of them is lôuk for dignitaries. Another form, hupan, is for high honors and degree of rank, and the third form hupâk is for inferior honors. Jacob (1968: 88) also lists hupan as a classifier.

Not a single form in the elaborated set of classifiers for humans in pre-revolutionary Khmer is a native Mon–Khmer form. The ūong(k), prêh-ūong(k), rûp and lôuk forms are all originally Sanskrit/Pali in origin. ūong(k) is from ânga meaning ‘body, limb, member or part’; rûp is from rûpa meaning, image, appearance, form’. These words are not classifiers in the languages of their origin since neither Sanskrit nor Pali are classifier languages. However, prêh-ūong(k), ūong(k) and rûp are also used as classifiers in Siamese for approximately the same set of objects and concepts, e.g. rûp is used for priests, drawings and photographs in Siamese. According to Gedney (1980, p.c.) it is not possible to determine whether Khmer borrowed these forms from Siamese or vice versa. Therefore, it is also impossible to know who innovated their use as classifiers.
The other classifiers are Siamese in origin. Tua and the Thai classifier tua are both glossed as 'body';9 however, the kinds of items they count are different. In Thai, the form is mainly for animals and additional things with limbs, like tables and shirts, but letters of the alphabet may also be classified by this form. The use with characters in plays occurs in Khmer only, and the Khmer classifier is much more limited in its scope ignoring the major usage in Thai for animals. The use of classifiers most frequently in Khmer literary language may explain some of these differences. Another Siamese form, hupan, is from a Siamese phrase huá phán which means 'who commands 1000 men' and the inferior honors classifier, hupák is related to paak an old Tai word meaning '100'.

During the period of Khmer Rouge control in Cambodia several changes were made in the lexicon of Khmer. Many of these changes related to those items that marked the status of people within the older royal culture and Buddhist society. While Marston (1988) limits his discussion to the effect of the Khmer Rouge philosophical changes and social reorganization on the structure of the pronoun system and the terms of address lexicon, the inferences for the classifier system are clear. First of all during this period there was limited use of writing which probably affected the overall frequency of the use of classifiers. According to Marston,

> The use of writing was severely curtailed. Courtly language had already begun to fall into disuse when the monarchy ended in 1970. In the course of the DK period, temples were closed and traditions of Buddhism dispensed with, and with them elaborate styles of diction associated with the monkhood ... There was some variation from place to place as to whether in these villages monks would be addressed with traditional forms or with the forms used with the general population. (1988: 16)

Several of the forms mentioned above can then be expected to have fallen into disuse both because of the restrictions on writing and on the changes in the social structure. One of these would be the pẹd form which was associated with the Buddhist ideal of sanctity and debt of loyalty directed to anyone with whom this term was used including parents. Since the Khmer Rouge wanted to sever all loyalty except that directed towards their movement this term fell into disuse. Another form that can be expected to have been eliminated was louk, which if really functioning as a classifier as Maspero claimed, would have fallen into disuse because it also became a prohibited honorific title at this time. As Marston notes (1988: 18) it was important for the Khmer Rouge not to be treated as if they were in the same category as those people who would have been addressed by this label, and they reprimanded people who used this term with Khmer Rouge soldiers.

It is possible that some of the classifiers remain in use, but might no longer be applied to certain social groups. For example monks might no longer be counted by rūp.

Marston’s data do not allow us to know if other words were added to the system, only that some classifiers, and perhaps their use in general, were eliminated or at least restricted. What has happened since the entry of the Vietnamese into the complex social situation is also yet to be characterized.

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9 This interpretation may be wrong as Headley et al. (1977) do not give this as the source of this classifier.
The Mon system of elaboration is much more restricted than the other two described above. In two of the three sources that cite classifiers, (see Table 4), the general human classifier is also used for monks and deities. One source, Halliday (1922), cited a separate classifier for kings and kingdoms, *kadāng petain*. Two of the sources, Halliday (1922) and Haswell (1901), also cited a class including men, governors, owners and masters. Shorto (1971) cites this latter form, *telaʔ* / *tlā*], as a learned form meaning ‘master, owner, lord’ and does not give it as a classifier in his modern spoken Mon dictionary. These two possible elaborated forms found in Mon, *kadāng petain* and *telaʔ*, are not related to any of those in the other Mon–Khmer languages. In addition, these classifiers do not seem to divide the social structure according to the idea of distance from Buddha as in Palaungic and pre-revolutionary Khmer, but more in terms of social power based on partly economic considerations, i.e. ownership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>deity</th>
<th>monk</th>
<th>king</th>
<th>man</th>
<th>governor</th>
<th>master/owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shorto 1962</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hōkao?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halliday 1922</td>
<td>kādāng</td>
<td>petain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cēkau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tala-----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haswell 1901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>jāku</td>
<td></td>
<td>tala-----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low 1837</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.** Mon categories for deities and humans

A very different and interesting style of elaboration is found in Bahnar proper and the Rōngao dialect in this area [Central Bahnaric]. Rather than the Palaungic, Khmer and Mon style of separate classifiers categorizing humans on dimensions of religiosity and political power, in Bahnar, one finds humans classified with inanimate objects and also with non-human animates on the basis of such notions as value and size. (See Table 5.)

In Bahnar proper and the Rōngao dialect, a classifier meaning ‘head’, *kol*, is used in a denigrating manner for humans. The central use of this form as cited by Guilleminet and Alberty (1959, 1963) is for ‘living beings and people and bonded souls’. Slavery and indenturing have been historically common in this area. The classifier is also used for inanimate things such as boats and valuables, and this usage appears to be derived from the concept of bonded souls as having a value and being worth a rate of exchange that can be applied to other objects.

Two of the forms found in the elaborated Bahnar system are honorifics but bear no resemblance to any of the other forms with this function in Mon–Khmer languages. *Māt*, one of the honorifics, also functions as a noun and has a variety of meanings including ‘eye, eyesight, hole in the ground for seeds, tear, lamina’ and in compounds ‘pupil of the eye’. This form is found throughout Southeast Asian languages, including Mon where it also means ‘precious stone’. This last meaning may help to explain its usage as an honorific i.e. as something of value. The second honorific, *tōng*, also treats a person’s social value as related to a kind of economic value. In this case, people are classified as equivalent to valuable items.
including jars, rifles and axes. Tòng is a form found throughout Bahnaric to classify things with handles.

The last two forms to be described here for Bahnar proper are classifiers whose uses are primarily for objects but are extended to include humans but unlike the extension of inanimate classifiers to humans in other languages these are not deprecat ing in the typical fashion. The form gär/gēr, meaning ‘seed’, ‘grain’, is used for adults in a speech genre whose forms are referred to as pōma pojoruh. Pōma pojoruh is a deprecating genre used when one does not want spirits to understand the topic under discussion. For example, one would use it when discussing the preparation of a sacrifice. The purpose of these forms is to protect the speakers in case they must cancel the sacrifice. If the normal language (which spirits understand) were used and the promised ritual were cancelled, the spirits would know this, be offended and punish the person making the promise (Guilleminet and Albert 1959). Thus the classifier makes humans diminutive and less than human and not recognizable to the spirits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bahnar proper (all dialects) (Guilleminet and Albert 1959, 1963)</th>
<th>honorific for person</th>
<th>non-honor for person</th>
<th>children bonded souls</th>
<th>non-human animates</th>
<th>things</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mät</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>korl*--&gt;</td>
<td>(valuable animals)---&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td>tòng (valuables)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>gär** (small spherical objects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>konâng (flat things)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | (belittling) | (poetic) | (fish) | | |
| | | | | | |

**Table 5. Elaborated classification of humans in Bahnar proper**

The gär/gēr form and konâng are both also used for children in Bahnar proper. The former is employed as a poetic form for children and is not belittling as with adults. The latter, konâng, is an extension to human children of a form used for flat inanimate objects and the immature of the dog and cat species. The form is cognate with kâng found in M'ng Gar meaning ‘board’. The description of immaturity beings as lacking a dimension, i.e. being flat rather than round, is also poetically pleasing. This form and the others described above are usages not seen so far in other Mon–Khmer languages. The Bahnar and Rongao system is one clearly associated with the Bahnar culture and not a borrowed one as we have seen with the other elaborated systems.

Vietnamese and Muong also have elaborated classes which are different from any of those encountered in the other Mon–Khmer systems. While there are categories which are similar to some of those described for Mon, Khmer and Palaungic which will be described below, both of these two languages have an extensive set of categories which are derived from their kinship systems. Their usage in the numeral classifier system is related to their usage in the pronominal system where kin
terms are employed with non-kin. The family in Vietnamese, Mường and other
Mon–Khmer cultures is the major social unit whose structure is also used to order
other kinds of social relationships. The set of classifiers based on kinship terms is
smaller than the set of extended pronouns, which is smaller than the set of kin terms
themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Mường</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lineal consanguine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cô/củ</td>
<td>great grandparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ông</td>
<td>grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bà</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anh</td>
<td>older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chị</td>
<td>older sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>em</td>
<td>younger sibling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collateral consanguine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bác</td>
<td>father’s older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chủ</td>
<td>father’s younger brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>câu</td>
<td>mother’s brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cô</td>
<td>father’s sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affinal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bác (đau)</td>
<td>father’s older brother’s wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thím (đau)</td>
<td>father’s younger brother’s wife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6. Vietnamese and Mường kin classifiers*

Table 6 cites the kin classifiers as reported by Nguyễn Đình Hoà (1957),
Thompson (1965) and Shafer (1975, p.c.) for Vietnamese and Sokolovskaija and
Nguyễn (1987) for Mường.

The use of these forms in Vietnamese has been described in detail in the above
cited sources and Adams (1989). For example, ông indicates great respect and is
used with men over 30 or 40, as well as with royalty, deities, and such professions
as doctors, priests, scholars, mayors, midwives and sorcerers. In Vietnamese and
Mường, it is not just occupation or wealth that determines the use of these forms,
but also sex, age, married state and other kinds of behavior that do or do not
deserve respect. The Mường use of kin classifiers follows similar patterns to the
related Vietnamese categories. For example, ông occurs with the noun ‘older
man’, em with ‘teacher’, un with ‘pupil’ and kô with ‘nurse’.

The set of items that makes up the kinship system in Vietnamese is drawn from
Mon–Khmer, Chinese and Thai sources. Of the elements discussed here that are
part of the classifier lexicon, cô, ông, bà and chị in the lineal consanguine set are
Chinese according to Benedict (1941). However, Diffloth (1982, p.c.) says that
there are cognates for ông throughout Bahnaric and that it might better be seen as a
native form. Anh and em are neither Chinese nor Thai according to Benedict. Con,
another lineal term meaning ‘child’, is definitely Mon–Khmer. Of the collateral
consanguine set bác, câu and cô are Chinese; only chủ is Mon–Khmer according to
Benedict (1941). Thím, the one other affinal term in the system is also Chinese.

The borrowed forms from Chinese are not classifiers in Chinese, so their use in
Vietnamese and Mường represent an innovation. The only other language in the
area with a classification system of the same style is Nung, a Tai language spoken in Vietnam, (see Saul 1965). However, the forms in question are not borrowings from Nung. The similarities are probably due to parallel developments by cultures sharing the same concerns.

Beyond the divisions based on kin metaphors, numerous other categories for humans are found in Mường and especially in Vietnamese. The different categories for humans in these two languages represent the most elaborated systems to be found in Mon–Khmer and in Austroasiatic as a whole. For example, Vietnamese and Mường have a separate classifier for children, dư3 in Mường. It counts words like ‘daughter’ and ‘children’ and by extension, ‘servant’. They both also have a form meaning ‘fellow, chap, boy’, singular 1 in Mường and thằng in Vietnamese, which occurs with words for ‘children’ and ‘boy’ and often has a slightly derogatory meaning like ‘urchin’.

Other classifiers for humans in Vietnamese also distinguish between respected occupations and people who are not highly valued. For example, chăng and nàng are archaic forms for respectable men and women respectively. Tay meaning ‘hand, arm’ classifies artisans. The word ‘house’, nhà, is used with monks, writers, poets and other occupations and carries with it the concept of those who live in groups or who are organized in some fashion. Some of the derogatory classifiers include ones for women of low repute who can also be counted with the animal classifier con. Nguyễn Đình Hoà (1957) also cites several classifiers for crooks.

A few of the classes in Vietnamese resemble those in Khmer, Mon, and Palaungic and mark religious people, royal people and other people of rank. According to Nguyễn Đình Hoà (1957), many of these forms occur in Sino-Vietnamese and, therefore, probably have their origin in Chinese. For office holders, heroes and kings, objects related to the king, and Buddhas and saints there are the following forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classifier</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>trang</td>
<td>for heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi</td>
<td>for officeholders and outstanding characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vien</td>
<td>for officeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngữ</td>
<td>for heroes and monarchs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngữ</td>
<td>for heroes and monarchs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>đa</td>
<td>for heroes and monarchs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>đa</td>
<td>for Buddhas and saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngữ</td>
<td>for royal personalities and objects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of these forms i.e. ngữ and vi actually mean ‘rank’. Đúc means ‘virtue’ and also functions as an honorific title. Ngữ means ‘royal, imperial’.

---

10 Đúc and ngữ are given as classifiers by Cao Thi Liễu (1980), but not by Nguyễn Đình Hoà (1966).

MKS 21:107-129 (c)1992 See archives.sealang.net/mks/copyright.htm for terms of use.
These similar groupings among these four languages in different branches are undoubtedly independent developments as the lexical items for these classes are not related to each other. As with Khmer, we can also expect that changes in the social structure during and following the Vietnam War will have affected the structure of the Vietnamese system as it relates to social categories.

A further similarity of Vietnamese to the Khmer system is the treatment of images separate from the animates associated with them. However, the forms in Vietnamese are not especially for images as in Khmer. In Vietnamese both con, the classifier for animals, and cái, the general classifier for inanimate objects, are the forms applied to images representing animates. For example, con is used for kites which can represent animates and for effigies and dolls. On the other hand, cái is also found with the sculptures of deities.

Before concluding this section, it is important to comment upon another aspect of the elaboration of human classification which occurs in several different Austroasiatic languages. As mentioned above for Vietnamese, Mường and Bahnar proper children may be counted separately from adults. In Viêt-Mường children are in a separate class, and in Bahnar they are counted in with flat inanimates. In addition to these examples, in Pacoh and Brou [Katuic], the general human classifier nak is not used to count children. S. Watson (1976) notes that in Pacoh, one generally uses lam, the general inanimate classifier, with one's own children. On the other hand, to use lam with adult humans is insulting. Miller (1976, p.c.) also reports that in Brou "lam is characteristically used with the word con 'child', with nak being used for adult humans." In Nicobarese one also finds manik as a separate classifier for children. The questions of how further widespread this distinction between adults and children is and of the exact nature of the social basis for this distinction need additional data for a complete answer.

Even though concepts of rank, status and age are important in the numeral classifier phrases of several Mon-Khmer languages, the above discussion demonstrates that the elaborated systems from Palaungic, Mon, Khmer, Bahnaric and Viêt-Mường differ from each other in significant ways. While these languages make distinctions along the lines of social value, the grounds for determining this value and the specific morphemes for these categories are quite different from each other. The distinct social categories represented in these systems are clearly a feature of the historical and cultural context of the various groups in the different branches of Mon-Khmer.

4. Conclusion

Becker (1975) and T’sou (1976) have both suggested that meanings of the particular classifier forms, if known, can be useful in identifying semantic dimensions that are specific to a language family. However, the diversity of forms for human classifiers in Mon-Khmer make patterns like those described for Burmese by Becker (1975) difficult to ascertain. Of the general human classifiers, only three are shared between branches: *kiʔ in Palaungic and Mon, nak in Katuic and Koho Sre [S. Bahnaric] and ngưđi in Vietnamese and Mường and North Bahnaric. The explanation for the variety of different morphemes in the Mon-Khmer subfamily
may partly be processes of lexical replacement because of taboos on the use of words resembling names of the dead and names referring to other taboo topics. When this kind of replacement occurs another native word or one from a non-Austronesian language may be substituted. These types of replacement have a random effect on lexical fields. Some of the variation can also be accounted for by the borrowing of classifiers specifically to function in this grammatical slot. The inventory of classifiers borrowed from Tai languages in northern and southern Khmu dialects is a notable example of this type of borrowing. The Khmu case represents a general strategy of bilingual speakers borrowing from a language with a more developed lexicon and/or with more prestige. These types of changes in the lexicon are more systematic.

While the diversity of the classifier lexicon for humans does not lead us to expect a single semantic pattern distinctive of the Mon–Khmer subfamily, interesting patterns do emerge when comparing the meanings of classifiers. Most of the classifiers for counting humans in general whose meanings can be identified refer to the species itself and are glossed as ‘person’, ‘man’, ‘human being’, or ‘adult human’. A few of these forms are additionally glossed as ‘body’, ‘self’, or ‘individual’, which all give the sense of an individual unit of person. The Monglwe [Palaungic] morpheme means ‘father, husband and male animal’; thus, it includes both humans and other species. The widespread chak/chanak/nak form in Katuic and Kôho Sre [S. Bahinaric] means ‘body’ and is not species specific but parallels the secondary meanings of the forms mentioned above. The only other identifiable morpheme is the one for ‘person’ that additionally means ‘eye’ in Viet–Mường and possibly in North Bahinaric.

While a discussion of non-human animate classification is outside the scope of this paper, Becker also suggests that semantic dimensions are most meaningfully identified when looked at in relation to each other. For example, in Burmese ‘head’ is used with relatively high status people and a form meaning ‘body’ is used for animals and derogatorily for humans. This latter usage is also found in Tai languages. Therefore, a comparison of the human classifiers with those for animals in Mon–Khmer might reveal some native patterns.

The Vietnamese and Mường elaborated systems for humans suggest that metaphorical extensions of kinship relationships are a semantic field that occurs in the numeral classification systems in Mon–Khmer. The Vietnamese and Mường systems have additional examples besides grandparent, aunt, uncle, and sibling mentioned above. Worthy of note is the fact that con meaning ‘child’ is the classifier for animals in these two languages. As mentioned earlier, it also is used derogatorily with women in some kinds of occupations like prostitution. (Cao [1980] claims it can be used with young males without being derogatory.) In Vietnamese some special animals such as tigers, elephants, and whales are also counted by family labels especially in proverbs and folktales. Vietnamese also has the form nhà which is used for groups of people and has as its origin the concept of house and also is employed in compounds for ‘family’.

Other languages in Mon–Khmer show smaller, but similar patterns. In Monglwe [Palaungic], the concept of human and animal were merged in the classifier meaning ‘father, husband, and male animal’. Unfortunately, only one example of how the form was employed occurred. It counted ‘man’. In Lamet [Palaungic] the morpheme kon meaning ‘elder, honorable person’ can be found
counting buffalo, animals associated with sacrifices to ancestors. Gold Palaung [Palaungic] also uses a form meaning ‘mother-seed’, *ka-mā*, to count female cows. In Central Bahnaric the classifier *bon* is a plural counter for animals and means ‘we-all’ and occurs as a prefix meaning ‘person and friends’ in Semai [Aslian]. These examples show not only the use of kin terms in the classifier lexicon, but also the extension of the concept of humans to animals.

In a related vein, the general classifier for humans in W. Bahnaric, ‘big, human adult’, gives the idea of humans as adults suggesting that the metaphoric concept of child fits elsewhere, perhaps with animals as in Vietnamese. The meaning of this term also suggests that the languages in this group consider children to be outside the category of ‘human’. and this may be another example of the separate treatment of children described above in Section 3. However, no specific data were available for West Bahnaric languages to prove this.

Becker’s work gave a body–part metaphor as an important unifying semantic dimension for Burmese. Body–part terms also appear in branches of Mon–Khmer, but the pattern they present is different from that in Burmese. As noted above, ‘body’ is a secondary meaning of some of the general human classifiers and a primary meaning in the Katuic branch, thus reversing the Burmese relationship. ‘Pupil of the eye’ and ‘eye’ also occur as the meaning of an honorific for humans in Bahnar proper and as the secondary meaning, (perhaps primary), of the general human classifier in Viet–Muôn and maybe North Bahnaric. While eyes are located in the head, the use of this term probably has nothing to do with the head/body: upper/lower relationship suggested for Burmese by Becker.

In Mon–Khmer languages the concept of ‘head’ occurs with animals rather than with humans as in Burmese. In these cases, if a speaker counts a human with the ‘head’ classifier, it is derogatory. In Khmer one finds *kbal* ‘head’ (borrowed from Sanskrit) used for books and other things, but also for certain kinds of animals like buffalo. In Bahnaric, one gets two different forms for ‘head’ used with animals. In the Central Bahnaric languages and dialects a form meaning ‘head’ or ‘summit’ is applied to bonded humans and also to animals of similar value, (see Table 6). In addition, in Chrau, Mnong Rolom and Mnong Gar [South Bahnaric] one finds the form *vōq*, ‘head’ or ‘the front part of something’, used for animals. It also counts slaves and is a measure for beer in Mnong Gar. Outside of the Mon–Khmer branch, some Munda languages also use ‘head’ to classify animals.

Other examples of numeral classifiers whose meanings supply semantic dimensions that might distinguish Mon–Khmer categories from those in other neighboring languages are not widespread. For example, the Bahnar proper classifier referring to ‘handle’ which counts valuable items like rifles and humans together is such an example. In Bahnar, the grouping of humans with a few other animates and inanimates of a specific marked value is of interest, but does not have appear to have exact parallels elsewhere. Many of the categories described above are borrowed and, while in cases such as Gold Palaung and Khmer there have been reinterpretations of the borrowed categories, such examples will not be as useful in demonstrating semantic dimensions that are likely to distinguish Mon–Khmer from surrounding languages. In order to do this, much fuller descriptions of the sets of items that are counted by the classifiers are needed as well as further work on sets of cognates in the family. Also comparisons to other areas of the lexicon that categorize humans might prove useful.
Appendix Mon–Khmer language sample

Khasi
  Standard Khasi
  Wār (Amwi)

Palaungic
  Lamet
  Angku
    Angku
    Amok
    Monglwe
    U
    Davies P’uman*
  Riang*
  Rumai
    Gold Palaung

Waic
  Samtau
    Tai loi
  Wa–Lawa–La
    La
    En
    Son
  Wa–Kengtung
  Wa–Lawa
    Drage’s Wa
  Wa proper: Davies Wa, Antisdel’s Wa, BibleWa, Kawa
  Lawa: Bo Luang, Umphai, Mae Sariang

Monic
  Mon

Khmer

Pearic*
  Pear

Khmuic
  Khmu (T’eng, Yuan)
  Mal (T’in)

Bahnaric
  North Bahnaric
    Rongao
    Sedang
    Halâng
    Jeh
    Hrê
  East Bahnaric
    Cua
Central Bahnaric
   Bahnar proper
      East dialects: Alakong, Bơnom, Golar, Tolo
      West dialects: Kontum, Ròngao, Jolong
   West Bahnaric
      Loven
      Brao
      Òi
South Bahnaric
   Stieng
      Central Mnong: Preh
      Eastern Mnong: Rơơm, Gar
      Kơơo Sre
      Chrau

Katuic
   Katu
   Kantu (High Katu)
   Brou
   Pacoh
   Kui

Viet–Mường
   Viet
      Vietnamese
      Mường

*No examples of classifiers included in the data

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