Bahnar Affixation [1]

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O. Introduction

Many of the Mon-Khmer languages, in contrast with the better known monosyllabic languages of Southeast Asia, have affixation. Affixes have been described in Khmer, Old Khmer,

Mon, Khmu?, and Khasi, and have been reported to occur in many other Mon-Khmer languages.[2] Bahnar also has considerable affixation, as was briefly outlined by Dourisboure and noted by Guilleminet.[3] The purpose of this paper is to present the affix system of Bahnar in detail.

Most Bahnar affixes can only occur on one-syllable roots because the Bahnar word limit is two syllables. $Bơ$-, the one exception, can occur with two-syllable roots by replacing their first syllable. $Jơ$-, which is a clitic, can occur with two-syllable roots and derived stems.

1. Nominalizer

1.1. Function of -ơn-. The only infix found in Bahnar is -ơn-, which functions syntactically as a nominalizer, converting verbs to nouns.

In many instances the derived noun has a meaning of

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[2] Georges Maspero, *Grammaire De La Langue Khmère*, pp. 193-223 (Paris, 1915).

J.M. Jacob, 'The Structure of the Word in Old Khmer', pp. 365, 366, *BSOAS* Vol. XXIII, Part 2 (1960).

Willam A. Smalley, *Outline of Khmu? Structure*, sec. 2.1317, 2.13210 (New Haven, Connecticut, 1961).

Lili Rabel, *Khasi, A Language of Assam*, p. 102 (Baton Rouge, 1961).

[3] R.P. Dourisboure, *Dictionnaire Bahnar-Francais* (Hong Kong, Imprimerie de la Société des Missions étrangères, 1889).

Paul Guilleminet and R. P. Jules Alberty, *Dictionnaire Bahnar - Francais* (Paris, 1959).

result, 'that which is made by the action of the verb'; e.g.

> *tăr* 'to weave', *tơnăr* 'woven bamboo'
>
> *bât* 'to make a dam', *bơnât* 'a dam'
>
> *dŏ* 'to divide into parts', *dơnŏ* 'divided out parts'
>
> *gŭk* 'to make a pile', *gơnŭk* 'a pile'
>
> *kao* 'to make a wedge', *kơnao* 'a wedge'
>
> *băng* 'to make a lid', *bơnâng* 'a lid'
>
> *chĕng* 'to make a partition', *chơnĕng* 'a partition'
>
> *chât* 'to sprout', *chơnât* 'new leaves'
>
> *jĭt* 'to shave (as wood)', *jơnĭt* 'shavings'
>
> *păt* 'to make a tail of arrow', *pơnăt* 'tail of arrow'
>
> *pah* 'to split', *pơnah* 'split bamboo'
>
> *dan* 'to place (as target)', *dơnan* 'a target'
>
> *jôr* 'to put liquid in bottle' *jơnôr* 'wine in bottle'
>
> *pŭ* 'to carry on back', *pơnŭ* 'a backload of thatch'
>
> *chok* 'to make a trough', *chơnok* 'crossbow trough'
>
> *dâng* 'to stand', *dơnâng* 'place where people stand'

In other instances the derived noun has an instrumental meaning, 'that which is used to perform the action of the verb'; e.g.

> *păr* 'to fly', *pơnăr* 'wing'
>
> *tôn* 'to hit with stick' *tơnôn* 'a hitting stick'
>
> *pai* 'to cook', *pơnai* 'a stirring stick'

tung 'to carry on shoulder', *tɔnung* 'stick for carrying things on shoulder'

tanh 'to weave', *tɔnanh* 'weaving materials'

punh 'to put burr in hair', *pɔnunh* 'a burr'

In a few instances the derived noun has a locational meaning, 'that place where the action of the verb is performed'; e.g.

pung 'to wallow', *pɔnung* 'wallowing hole'

The 'result', 'instrumental', and 'locational' meanings of the derived nouns can be shown to be structurally contrastive with each other when the verb root and the derived noun are used together in a sentence. An 'instrument' must be preceded by one of the following prepositions : *păng, sĕm, hăm* ' with '. A 'location' must be preceded by one of the following prepositions : *tɔ* 'to, in, at', *lăm* 'in', *gah* 'side', *'bât* 'place', *kiĕ* 'place'. A 'result' cannot be preceded by a preposition; e.g.

Result :

    ĭnh tăr tɔnăr 'I weave-bamboo woven-bamboo'

    ĭnh bât bɔnât 'I make-dam a-dam'

    ĭnh dŏ dɔnŏ 'I divide-out divided-out-parts'

Instrument :

    sem păr păng pɔnăr 'bird fly with wings'

ĭnh tôn kŏ păng tơnôn 'I hit-with-stick dog with hitting-stick'

ĭnh pai păng pơnai 'I cook with stirring-stick'

Location :

kơpô pung tơ pơnung 'carabao wallow in wallowing-hole'

On a given verb root it is not possible to predict which meaning the affixation will take.

The infix is apparently still active in Bahnar as seen in such new coinages as *tơneh* 'cigarette lighter' from *teh* 'to strike'. *ĭnh teh tơneh* 'I strike cigarette lighter'. But the infix cannot be used freely to convert verbs to nouns.

1. 2. Allomorphs of -*ơn*-.[4] The infix -*ơn*- has phonologically conditioned allomorphs -*ơm*- and -*ơd*- before *r*, and -*ơng*- before *l* (because `ʼnr` and *nl* sequences are not allowed in Bahnar), and *bơ*- before verb root initial *m*.

-*ơm*- occurs before *r* when the initial consonant of the root is bilabial.

preh 'to hit at', *bơmreh* 'dead stick used for hitting at things'

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4. *a*- 'nominalizer' has been found with one verb root *chŏ* 'to tie up' giving *achŏ* 'a bundle'. This does not fit the other nominalizing patterns.

Because verb roots beginning with m take the bo — allo-morph giving a bom- sequence, here the bom- sequence is also preferred to the expected pom-.

$-od$- occurs before r when the initial consonant of the root is not bilabial.

$kr\breve{o}u$ 'to poison fish', $kodr\breve{o}u$ 'fish poison'

$kruh$ 'to make a pile', $kodruh$ 'fishtrap made by piling trees and leaves over water'

$hring$ 'to string fish, etc', $hodring$ 'a string'

$-ong$- occurs before l.

$klat$ 'to slice', $konglat$ 'a slice'

$kl\hat{a}p$ 'to cover', $tongl\hat{a}p \sim kongl\hat{a}p$ 'a cover'

$klang$ 'to construct bamboo - tube water system', $tonglang$ 'bamboo-tube water system'

In Bahnar initial k sometimes alternates with t before ve-lars.

bo- occurs before verb roots beginning with m.

$muih$ 'to make field in woods', $bomuih$ 'field in woods'

$m\hat{a}t$ 'to enter', $bom\hat{a}t$ 'west, place where sun enters'

Preglottalization cannot occur presyllable-initial in Bahnar except as reduplication of the intial consonant of the main syl-

lable. When verb roots beginning with preglottalization occur
with the nominalizing infix they take various forms:

The preglottalization may be completely lost and the infix
keep its regular form *-o·n-,*

'dȧr 'to stamp the earth', *do·nȧr* 'a mound of stamped
earth on a grave'

The preglottalization may be transferred to the infix as
-o·n-, and the initial consonant of the noun stem become
voiceless.

'dȧp 'to cover', *to·'nȧp* 'a cover'

Or the initial consonant of the verb root may be lost and
its preglottalization occur presyllable initial, the infix taking the
form *-an-.*

'nŭng 'to wrap up', *anŭng /'anŭng/* 'a package'

2. Causative

2.1. *Po- ~ to- ~ a-* occur with verb roots giving them
a causative meaning, e.g.

lŏch 'to die'	*po·lŏch* 'to kill'
jĭ 'to be hurt'	*po·jĭ* 'to make to hurt'
hiong 'to be lost'	*to·hiong* 'to lose on purpose'
băt 'to know'	*to·băt* 'to make to know'
lŏk 'to go up'	*a·lŏk* 'to make to go up'

Pȯ- ~ *tơ-* ~ *a-* are unconditioned allomorphs. Each verb root can occur with only one of the causative allomorphs with the exception of *'bŏu* 'to smell' and *wir* 'to be deceived' which have free variation between *po-* and *tơ-*.

Following is a sampling of the verb roots that occur with *po-* 'causative' : *'dôh* 'to explode, burst', *drâng* 'to answer', *hrŭk* 'to dress', *chê* 'to despise', *kăp* 'to bite', *'lâng* 'to be good', *ơh* 'to be sad', *tah* 'to put in', *wao* 'to understand'.

Following is a sampling of the verb roots that occur with *tơ-* 'causative' : *lĕch* 'to go out', *'bĭch* 'to lie down', *hli* to fear', *iung* 'to stand up', *jur* 'to go down', *mât* 'to enter', *oĕi* 'to be at', *pŭ* 'to carry on back', *wih* 'to go home'.

Tŏk 'to go up' is the only verb root found to occur with *a-* 'causative'.

The causative prefix is apparently still active in Bahnar as seen in such new coinages as *po-ao-wi* 'to make to hurt' from the English word *owie* (ouch). This prefix is used more extensively than the nominalizing infix but cannot be used freely.

2.2. A simple transitive verb takes only a direct object. When it occurs with the causative prefix an indirect object

must be added. [5]

 Rŏk 'bôh 'long 'Rok see tree'

 Rŏk tơ'bôh kơ Set 'long 'Rok show to Set tree'

A simple intransitive verb root takes no object. When it occurs with the causative prefix a direct object must be added.

 Rŏk jur 'Rok go-down'

 Rŏk tơjur Set 'Rok let-down Set'

3. Reciprocal

3.1. *Tơ-* occurs with many verb roots giving them the reciprocal meaning 'I do it to you, and you do it to me'.

 jïl 'to butt', *tơjïl* 'to butt each other'

 druh 'to chase', *tơdruh* 'to chase each other'

 blah 'to fight', *tơblah* 'to fight each other'

Following is a sampling of the verb roots that can occur with *tơ-* 'reciprocal' : *'bet* 'to stab', *chă* 'to look for', *choh* 'to peck', *glâm* 'to knock down', *kăp* 'to bite', *pi* 'to fan', *tôn* 'to hit with a stick, *trĕng* 'to look at closely'.

Some of the verb roots that occur with *pơ-* ' causative '

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can also occur with *tɔ-* 'reciprocal', e.g.

Verb Root	Causative	Reciprocal
drâng 'to answer'	*pɔdrâng* 'to ask'	*tɔdrâng* 'to answer each other'
chê 'to despise'	*pɔchê* 'to make to despise'	*tɔchê* 'to despise each other'
ɔh 'to be sad'	*pɔɔh* 'to make sad'	*tɔɔh* 'to be sad because of each other'
krê 'to fear'	*pɔkrê* 'to frighten'	*tɔkrê* 'to fear each other'
kăp 'to bite'	*pɔkăp* 'to make to bite'	*tɔkăp* 'to bite each other'

The verb roots that occur with *tɔ-* 'causative' cannot occur with *tɔ-* 'reciprocal'.

When the reciprocal prefix occurs with the verb root it requires two actors or a plural actor, e.g.

Rŏk păng Set tɔtôn (dih-băl)
'Rok and Set hit-each-other-with-sticks (each-other)'

Lŭ sɿ tɔtôn (dih-băl)
'Plur. he hit-each-other-with-sticks (each-other)'

Rŏk tɔtôn păng Set
'Rok hit-each-other-with-sticks and Set'

Dih-băl 'each other' may be used following all reciprocal constructions except those in which one of the actors follows the verb (note example 3 above). But it is able to be omitted without affecting the meaning, except when the action of the verb root is being performed on the possessions of the actors ; e.g.

Rŏk păng Set totôn dih-băl kŏ

'Rok and Set hit-each-other-with-sticks each-other dog'

Rok and Set hit each other's dog with sticks

3.2. *Dih-băl* can be used alone, without *to-* reciprocal prefix, to give the verb roots a reciprocal meaning. Verb roots that occur with *to -* 'causative' cannot occur with *to -* 'reciprocal', therefore must form their reciprocal with *dih-băl.* Affixed stems and two-syllable verb roots must also form their reciprocal in this manner, e.g.

Rŏk păng Set hli dih-băl
'Rok and Set fear each other'

Rŏk păng Set tohli dih-băl
'Rok and Set scare each other'

Rŏk păng Set kodah dih-băl
'Rok and Set kick each other'

4. Passive

4. 1. Bahnar has a *to-* 'passive' prefix which is ho-

mophonous with *to-* 'reciprocal' and *to-* 'causative' prefixes. This passive prefix can be clearly distinguished from the reciprocal and causative prefixes by its syntactic function.

To- 'passive' occurs with a few verb roots giving them the meaning 'the action of the verb root performed on the subject', e.g.

'*long togâ* 'tree broke'

The passive prefix has been found with only the following verb roots :

glĕch 'to twist'	*toglĕch* 'to be twisted (as joint)'
gâ 'to break'	*togâ* 'to be broken'
hak 'to spread apart'	*tohak* 'to be spread apart'
hek 'to tear'	*tohek* 'to be torn'
hleh 'to take apart at seams'	*tohleh* 'to be apart at seams'
plŏ 'to peel off'	*toplŏ* 'to be peeled off'
plâ 'to turn inside out'	*toplâ* 'to be turned inside out'
ploih 'to open'	*toploih* 'to be open'
yaih 'to untie'	*toyaih* 'to be untied'

The verb roots that occur with *to-* ' passive' can also occur with *to-* ' reciprocal', but cannot occur with *to-* ' causative '.

4. 2. The functional contrast between the three to- affixes may be clearly seen when the affixed constructions are transformed to an unaffixed form.

S = subject, P = predicate, and O = object. Within a given battery the occurrence of a certain number indicates the occurence of its manifesting root, whether in the subject or object position.

Passive	Causative	Reciprocal
$S_1 - to$ - P	$S_1 - to$ - P $- O_2$	$S_1 - S_2 - to$ - P
$S_2 - P - O_1$	$S_2 - P$	$S_1 - P - O_2$

Passive :

'lonq togâ	'tree broken'
Rŏk gâ 'long	'Rok broke tree'

Causative :

Rŏk tojur Set	'Rok let-down Set'
Set jur	'Set went-down'

Reciprocal.

Rŏk păng Set totôn	'Rok and Set hit-each-other-with-sticks'
Rŏk tôn Set	'Rok hit-with-stick Set'

5. Similitive *Lol-* 'similitive' occurs with demonstrative roots giving them the meaning 'to be like'. This prefix

has been found with the following six roots :

ŏu	'this'	*lo῾lŏu*	'like this'
'nu	'this'	*no῾'nu*	'like this'
ĕi	'that'	*lo῾lĕi*	'like that'
noh	'that'	*no῾noh*	'like that'
'noh	'that'	*no῾'noh*	'like that'
yo῾	'what'	*lo῾lio῾*	'like what'

Before *n*, *lo῾l-* becomes *no῾-* by assimilation, the second *l* dropping out because the *ln* cluster is not permitted in Bahnar.

6. Completed Action

6.1. *Jo῾-* is a clitic meaning 'completed action'. Affixes can only occur with one-syllable roots, but the clitic *jo῾-* is able to occur with two-syllable roots and prefixed stems as well; e.g.

One-syllable verb roots :

băt	'to know'	*jo῾băt*	'to have known'
khan	'to say'	*jo῾khan*	'to have said'
thuo῾	'to lose'	*jo῾thuo῾*	'to have lost'
nŏng	'to try'	*jo῾nŏng*	'to have tried'
jăk	'to escape'	*jo῾jăk*	'to have escaped'
o῾h	'to be sad'	*jo῾o῾h*	'to have been sad'

Two-syllable verb roots :

chŏkăl 'to lock door'	*jŏchŏkăl* 'to have locked door'
dŏliêl 'to stick out tongue'	*jŏdŏliêl* 'to have stuck out tongue'
gŏnam 'to threaten'	*jŏgŏnam* 'to have threatened'
hŏmet 'to prepare'	*jŏhŏmet* 'to have prepared'
kŏdah 'to kick'	*jŏkŏdah* 'to have kicked'
sŏ'nâr 'to wake up'	*jŏsŏ'nâr* 'to have waked up'

Prefixed stems :

Caus :

pŏlôch 'to kill'	*jŏpŏlôch* 'to have killed'
tŏ'bôh 'to show'	*jŏtŏ'bôh* 'to have shown'

Recip :

tŏchă 'to look for each other'	*jŏtŏchă* 'to have looked for each other'
tŏhil 'to be angry with each other'	*jŏtŏhil* 'to have been angry with each other'

Passive :

tŏgâ 'to be broken'	*jŏtŏgâ* 'to have been broken'
tŏyaih 'to be untied'	*jŏtŏyaih* 'to have been untied'

Simil :

> *lolĕi*   'like that'   *jololĕi* 'to have been like that'
>
> *lolŏu* 'like this'   *jololŏu* 'to have been like this'

6. 2. In normal Bahnar speech the meaning of 'completed action' is more often expressed by *boih* 'already' than by the clitic *jo-*. Both the clitic and *boih* may occur at the same time, but either can be omitted without affecting the meaning ; e. g.

> *ĭnh jobăt*   'I know-already'
>
> *ĭnh băt boih*   'I know already'
>
> *ĭnh jobăt boih*   'I know-already already'

7 Other Affixal Forms [6]

7. 1. *Bo-* 'Pig-latin'

Bahnar has a type of 'pig-latin' that is formed by prefixing *bo-* to all the words in a given utterance, except the connective *ko* and the preposition *to*, which are omitted. When two-syllable words occur the *bo-* prefix replaces the first syllable. The clitic *jo-* does not figure as an integral part of the word, so *bo-* is inserted between *jo-* and the word root.

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[6]. Guilleminet described a *ho-* prefix in his article, 'Langages Spéciaux Utilisés Dans La Tribu Bahnar Du Kontum (Sud Viêt-Nam-Indochine)', p. 125 **BEFEO** Tome L, Fasc. I.

The *bơ-* affix in no way changes the meaning of the utterance.

This form of speech is characteristic **of** Rok, one of the popular characters of Bahnar legends. It is not used in normal speech except in imitation of the legendary Rok. Following are examples of the occurrence of *bơ-:*

> *ĭnh tăr tơnăr* 'I weave-bamboo woven-bamboo'
> *bơĭnh bơtăr bơnăr* 'I weave-bamboo woven-bamboo'
> *ĭnh tơ'bôh kơ Set 'long* 'I show to Set tree'
> *bơĭnh bơ'bôh bơSet bơ'long* 'I show to Set tree'
> *ĭnh jơpơlôch Set* 'I kill-already Set'
> *bơĭnh jơbơlôch bơSet* 'I kill-already Set'

7. 2. *Tơ-* 'Measure'

Tơ- is prefixed to the numbers '*bar*' 'two', *pêng* 'three', and *puăn* 'four' giving them the meaning 'two-fingers size', 'three-fingers size', and 'four-fingers size' respectively.

The Bahnar people describe the size of some things in comparison with the size of their fingers. A fish may be two-fingers size. A cloth may have a hole in it three-fingers size, etc. They also use this system to measure or compare abstract qualities. This measuring system does not exceed five-fingers size. The words expressing one-finger size and five-

fingers ˙size are separate roots, *bât* and *pah*, respectively; e. g.

ih răt honhuăl ih năng lŭn tŏ topêng
'you buy fish net you look put-in size three-fingers'
You buy a fish net with holes big enough to put three fingers in

pogê ĭnh 'bôh 'dêl soke, mah tŏ topuăn
'morning I see footprint wild-pig, enough size four-fingers'
This morning I saw the footprint of a wild pig that was the size of four fingers

ĭnh apo brŭ' tŏ to'bar apo hmar tŏ topêng
'I dream bad size two-fingers dream good size three-fingers'
There was more good in my dream than bad

7.3. *Ko-* 'Negative'

Ko- can occur with all one-syllable verb roots making them negative. Following is a sampling of the verb roots that can occur with *ko-* 'negative' :

'bôh	'to see'	*ko'bôh*	'not see'
ăn	'to give'	*koăn*	'not give'
iung	'to stand up'	*koiung*	'not stand up'
chă	'to look for'	*kochă*	'not look for'
wĕnh	'to wring'	*kowĕnh*	'not wring'
wih	'to go home'	*kowih*	'not go home'

The free form of the negative which is more often used

consists of *ɯh* 'negative' followed by *kɔ* 'connective'.

Free form :

   ĭnh ɯh kɔ băt 'I neg. conn. know' *I don't know*

Affixed form :

   ĭnh kɔbăt 'I neg.—know' *I don't know*

When the negative prefix occurs with *wă* 'to want' it contracts to *kuă*. *ɯh kɔ wă* 'don't want' is one of the more widely used negative Bahnar expressions and has probably contracted to the form *kuă* for convenience. Similar verb roots sush as *wĕnh* 'to wring' and *wih* 'to go home' leave the prefix uncontracted. (See examples above).