Evidence for Prehistoric Austronesian–Khmer Contact and Linguistic Borrowing

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Standard historical work on Cambodia has taken literally the statement in the Sdok Kak Thom inscription (K 235), the most detailed record of the founding of Angkor, although written over two hundred years later, that the first Angkor king, Jayavarman II, came, or returned, from Java, and that he organized a rite to insure Cambodia's independence from Java. Apparent confirmation is also found in K 956, which refers to another ceremony to "prevent Kambuja from being taken by Java." These statements from the Khmer side have been related to a vague Arab seamen's tale of a Mahārāja of Zabag, variously interpreted as Sumatra (Śrīvijaya) or Java, who attacked Cambodia and killed its king. Taking off from this, it has been inferred that not only did the Mahārāja of Zabag kill the reigning king, but that he also took a Cambodian prince back to Zabag, and that this was the future Jayavarman II.[1] There can be no doubt that the very active maritime trading throughout Southeast Asia and between Southeast Asia and India linked most regions with one another, that contacts among Cambodia, Java, and Sumatra may have been frequent and important, and that signs of influence of one region on the language or art of another would not be surprising. There is also unimpeachable evidence, in the form of local contemporary inscriptions, that during the eighth century the southern coast of Champa was subject to attacks by people who were called 'Javā'. Whether this led to an invasion and regicide in Cambodia is something else, but I shall not be concerned with that question here.[2]

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[1] Cœdès, *Les états hindouisés d'indochine et d'indonésie*, Paris, deBocard, 1964, pp. 177, 184; Engl. transl. *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1968, pp. 93, 97; Lawrence Palmer Briggs, *The Ancient Khmer Empire*, Philadelphia, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series, vol. 41, part 1, 1951, pp. 65–69; Pierre Dupont, "Débuts de la royauté angkorienne," *BEFEO* 1952–54, XLI:119–76, see pp. 152–57. Subsequent work has been more circumspect. O.W. Wolters, in "Jayavarman II's military power: the territorial foundation of the Angkor empire," *JRAS*, 1973, 1, p. 21, n. 7, said "[t]he significance of 'Javā' in this context is unknown;" and in his discussion of Jayavarman II in *History, culture, and region in Southeast Asian perspectives*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), p. 7 he did not even mention this detail. Similarly, Claude Jacques, "La carrière de Jayavarman II", *BEFEO* 1972, LIX, p. 208, wrote "... Jayavarman II, venant de Java — quel que soit le lieu que ce nom représente." The Sdok Kak Thom inscription was published in G. Cœdès et P. Dupont, "Les inscriptions de Sdok Kak Thom, Phnom Sandak et Prah Vihar," *BEFEO*, 1943–46, XLIII:56–154; and inscription K 956 is the "Dalle de Vat Saṃròṅ", published in *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (IC) VII, pp. 128–36, see p. 133.

[2] In fact I do not believe it, and consider that Jayavarman II never set foot outside Cambodia, except possibly to Champa. The adhocery of these excursions into speculative history is illustrated by Cœdès' remark, *États* ..., p. 184; *States* ..., p. 97, that "[t]he family of Jayavarman II ... no doubt took refuge in Java during the disturbances over the succession [which disturbances were the result of the putative Javanese invasion]—unless it had been taken there by force following one of the maritime invasions discussed in the preceding chapter [pp. 91, 95]", all of which were invasions of Champa and Vietnam, not Cambodia.

My purpose in this paper is to discuss two items of possible Javanese influence in Cambodia, one proposed by Pierre Dupont, and which I think is mistaken, and another, hitherto unnoticed, which I think really shows Javanese, or some other Austronesian, economic and linguistic influence in Cambodia, but from long before the time of Jayavarman II.

heṅ / hyaṅ

The title *kanheṅ / kañheṅ* (probably 'queen'), along with its base form *heṅ* /Angkorian *hyaṅ*, and *teṅ hyaṅ*, were discussed by Pierre Dupont, who intended to demonstrate that Old Khmer *heṅ / hyaṅ* was the general Indonesian *hyaṅ* (Old Javanese), *yaṅ*, *yāṅ* (Cham) which "designates approximately all that is sacred", and is equivalent to Mon–Khmer *braḥ*.[3] Khmer *hyaṅ*, as far as we know, would have represented an aspirate /h/ followed by a diphthong /ia ~ iə/, or by a vowel and semivowel, /iya/, just as the OJav. *hyaṅ* is believed to have been pronounced /hiyaŋ/. In OJav. writing *hy* had been replaced by *he* by the 11th century, although the script was very conservative and the change in the spoken language must have occurred earlier. The particular development in question, however, *hyaṅ* > *heṅ*, although theoretically possible, is not attested in Javanese.[4]

Dupont's discussion started from the Angkorian form *hyaṅ*, found in several 10–11th century inscriptions referring to women associated with Jayavarman II (late 8th to early 9th century), but he remarked that the earliest attested occurrence of the term was in *kanheṅ*, in inscription K 124 near Kratie in northeastern Cambodia, dated AD 803.[5]

Having proposed the Indonesian identification, Dupont suggested that *heṅ* was derived from *hyaṅ* "by metathesis" and that was a "phonetic evolution ... characteristic of Javanese and marked the passage from the ancient to the modern language." Thus it was astonishing to find the later form *heṅ* in use in Cambodia as early as 803; and Dupont postulated a more rapid development of the Javanese spoken language than its written form, true enough in itself, and direct immediate borrowing by OKhm., or an influence of OKhm. phonology on Javanese *hyaṅ* to produce *heṅ* independently in Khmer.

Just a year after Dupont's 1952 publication, Cœdès' fifth volume of *IC* appeared, including K 9 [AD 639], from Đong Tháp province in southern Vietnam, in which the principal person involved in the foundation was *kañheṅ vraḥ añ lāṅ gus*, showing *kañheṅ* nearly 200 years earlier than a date which Dupont already considered surprisingly early, and 100 years or more before the period of alleged

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[3] Dupont, "Débuts ...", pp.152–7. See also Cœdès' discussion, *IC* III:170–4. Not all Khmé risants are in agreement that *kañheṅ / kanheṅ / kanhyaṅ* was 'queen', but the problem may be ignored here. It at least denoted women of royal status. One certain princess, was *kanhyaṅ kamrateṅ añ* Indralakṣmī (inscriptions K 236, K 669), daughter of King Rājendravarman (944–968) and sister of Jayavarman V (968–1001); and probable queens are recorded in K 9, Cœdès, "Stèle de Phu–Hưu", *IC* V:35–8 (AD 639), and in K 124, Cœdès, "Inscription de Vat Tasar Moroy", *IC* III: 170–4 (AD 803).

[4] This information on Javanese was supplied by Professor J.G. de Casparis in Canberra, 9–12 May 1984. Dupont, p. 156, also noted that OJav. *hyaṅ* was an exception to the rule.

[5] Dupont, p. 156.

Javanese domination of Cambodia with which Dupont wished to associate the adoption of *hyaṅ / heṅ* by OKhm. from OJav.[6]

It is clear that OKhm. *heṅ*, at least, must be dissociated from Javanese *hyaṅ*; but there is also no doubt that OKhm. *heṅ* (pre–Angkor) and *hyaṅ* (Angkor) represent the same term, since the correspondence *(h)e(ṅ) / (h)ya(ṅ)* is well–attested by several pairs of words. There was either an evolution within Khmer /e > ya/ (with the direction of change opposite from that of Javanese), or more likely two dialects in different parts of the country.[7]

There is thus no justification for the relationship proposed by Dupont between OKhm. *heṅ / hyaṅ* and Javanese–Cham *hyaṅ / yāṅ*; and this isolated support for the 'sojourn of Jayavarman II in Java' disappears.

yau and *vlaḥ*

An early (pre– or proto–historic) Austronesian–Khmer connection is demonstrated with certainty by two Old Khmer terms found in a number of Pre–Angkor inscriptions and indicating pieces, or lengths, of cloth. They are *yau* and *vlaḥ*, for which Cœdès never produced a translation, nor has Jenner proposed a translation in his dictionaries.[8]

In the pre–Angkor inscriptions in which these terms occur officials typically gave rice land, or its produce, to a foundation and received in return pieces of cloth, which had probably been woven locally, for weavers are occasionally listed among 'temple' personnel.[9]

The Javanese inscriptions are quite different, and are characterized by gifts given to officials present at the ceremony recorded in the inscriptions by the person in whose favor the foundation was established; and the most frequent gifts were "pieces of cloth", those for the men "almost always in sets (yu)", and for the women "in a single piece (blah)", of which the latter term means 'half'.[10] This distinction between women and men with respect to cloth is never found in the Old Khmer inscriptions.

In *yu* and *blah* we are certainly faced with the *yau* and *vlaḥ* of Old Khmer, which Cœdès and Jenner were unable to explain except in general, as units of cloth with *vlaḥ* the smaller; and in addition to an improvement in definition, we perhaps

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[6] This is explicit in Dupont, p. 157.

[7] See Cœdès *IC* II:3–4: *meṅ / (kan)myaṅ* 'youth', *dnem / dnyam* 'pair', *vṅe / vṅya* 'flower', *canlek / canlyak* 'clothing', *camreṅ / camryaṅ* 'song'. Another example is *ver / vyar* 'two', discussed in this volume in Vickery, "A Modern Number Term in Old Khmer".

[8] P.N. Jenner *CPAK*, II [1981] and IV [1982].

[9] Such inscriptions are a small minority of the total corpus. A good example is K 79, published by Cœdès as "Stèle de Tà Kèv (?)", *IC* II:69–72. The question mark is unnecessary. Judged by its content and style there can hardly be any doubt that K 79 is from the Takeo region.

[10] Antoinette M. Barrett Jones, *Early Tenth Century Java From the Inscriptions*, Dordrecht: Foris (Verhandelingen van het Instituut voor Taal–, Land– en Volkenkunde, 1984, pp. 33, 144. She provides the gloss 'half' in a discussion of land measurement, but there can be no doubt that the same term is in question.

have a clue to origins and international relationships, for *blah* is Austronesian, probably Chamic, Malay, or Javanese, borrowed by Khmer rather than moving in the opposite direction.[11]

As should be expected if Old Khmer borrowed such technical terms from Austronesian, all of the pre–Angkor occurrences of *vlaḥ* are in the southern regions, most in Takeo Province, with some in Kandal, and one in Kompong Speu, whereas only later in the Angkor period does the term appear in northern inscriptions in Battambang, Siemreap, and even in Ubon, now a part of northeast Thailand. OKhm. *yau* was somewhat more widespread, yet still predominantly southern, found, in addition to the contexts with *vlaḥ*, in Kompong Cham, in Prachinburi across Cambodia's present northwestern border in Thailand, and in Kratie, but there in the very late K 124 of AD 803. By Angkor times it also appears throughout the northern provinces.[12]

The Cambodian exchanges of *yau* and *vlaḥ* do not appear to be commercial, and, unlike the Javanese record, there is hardly any reference to market activity in the entire pre–Angkor corpus. An attractive inference is that they represented exchanges of prestige goods of a type widely recorded by anthropologists in other societies.[13]

That hypothesis accords well with the use of foreign Austronesian technical terms in a certain type of exchange, when Khmer certainly possessed its own word for 'half', and probably had native terminology for types of cloth.[14]

And it is strengthened by the circumstance that the listed objects often do not add up to consistent totals, for as emphasized by Leach 'ritual wealth objects' are extremely disparate and their quality as such bears no necessary relationship to objective value or utility.

Since the Khmer did not borrow these terms from Java as part of an institutional structure, why and when were they borrowed at all? Perhaps this indicates that the

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[11] In Malay it is /belah/, Achenese /plah/ (Vaughn Collins "The position of Atjehnese among the Southeast Asian Languages", *MKS* 1969, 3:48–60 [p. 53] 'split'), Röglai (a Chamic language in southern Vietnam) /vlah/; and it has been identified as Proto–Austronesian *belaq / *belah (Otto Christian Dahl, *Proto–Austronesian*, Lund: Studentlitteratur, London: Curzon Press, ^{2}1976, p. 30). OKhm. initial /v/ often corresponds to /b/ in later Khmer. I wish to thank David and Dorothy Thomas for providing me with the bibliographic reference to Collins.

[12] It must be noted, however, that with the exceptions of Sambor–Kratie and the site of future Angkor, there are hardly any pre–Angkor inscriptions in the northern provinces. The pre–Angkor contexts are *vlaḥ*, K 41, K 79, K 154, K 424, K 561, K 689; *yau*, K 30, K 41, K 79, K 124, K 154, K 424, K 493, K 561, K 689, K 712, K 726, and K 505 [Prachinburi] where *yau* occurs in a quite different context, as a measure of types of cloth not mentioned elsewhere, and which have not yet been identified.

[13] George Condominas, *Nous avons mangé la forêt de la Pierre–Génie Gôo*. Paris: Mercure de France, 1957, called them 'goods of value'; some Africanists have preferred 'prestige goods' (David Snedden, *Relations of Production, Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology*, transl. by Helen Lackner, London: Frank Cass, 1978); and Edmund Leach, *Political systems of highland Burma*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1965, pp. 144–5, called them 'ritual wealth objects'. Meillasoux, in Snedden, p. 194, noted that production of prestige goods often involved the most complicated techniques known to the society, such as iron–working and weaving.

[14] The widespread Mon–Khmer /taŋ/ 'to weave', and /t_m_aŋ/ 'weaver' in pre–Angkor inscriptions proves that the Khmer had not learned weaving from Austronesians.

contact was not with Java, but with their close Chamic neighbors. The question 'why' persists.

Perhaps only speculation is possible, and it focuses on Funan. The ethnic and linguistic nature of Funan is uncertain. There is good reason to think that Khmer, or at least Mon–Khmer, were important, perhaps dominant, but the maritime nature of its economy means that a large foreign population must have been present. Since Austronesians are believed to have been seafarers, they probably comprised a large element, particularly since they occupied adjacent regions. Their *vlaḥ* and *yau* must have represented types of cloth not woven by the Khmer, perhaps types of cloth used only in ritual gift–giving or exchange, and they were adopted as such by the Khmer, even though the Khmer rituals were different.

The strictly terminological, rather than institutional borrowing, shows that at whatever time it occurred, in was not through Javanese conquest or hegemony, but through contact between two peoples existing in a close relationship and open to mutual cultural influences.

27 May 1992

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