

## A ‘modern’ number term in Old Khmer

Michael VICKERY  
Universiti Sains Malaysia

In his “Les noms de nombre en Khmer”, Philip Jenner, after describing the modern Khmer terms for the numbers 11 to 19 of the form /muəy/ – /prambuən/ (1–9) + /dan/ + /dop/ (10), said that that it was a mistake to analyze the element /dan/ as a conjunction, for “... a conjunctive element \*/dan/ never existed in Khmer, and /dandap/... is a normal derivation from /dap/” (‘ten’), that is, “a primary reduplicated derivation \*/ddap/”, followed by “a secondary derivation” with nasal infix.<sup>1</sup>

The pre-Angkor inscription K 76 [7<sup>th</sup> AD] seems to contradict Jenner, for there we find the phrase “*ple ver dan tap tanlonn*”, ‘fruit [produce?] (*ple*), 12 (*verdantap tanlonn*)’ (a unit or measure of weight), which differs from the modern ‘teen’ term only in the final velar rather than dental nasal in *dani*. This term is a common conjunction, usually to be translated ‘with’, in PA Khm., and the expression in K 76 seems to prove that the syllable /dan/ in the modern colloquial ‘/pi dandop/’ (*bir tantap*) ‘12’ is in origin the OKhm. conjunction *dani*.<sup>2</sup>

Cœdès did not provide a translation of this inscription, and one wonders what he would have done with it, for ‘two’ in Old Khmer has always been a problem, and Cœdès’ treatment of *ver* in *Inscriptions du Cambodge* is ambiguous, but by the time he produced Volume VI, he had settled on *ver* as ‘two’. Thus in K 22 (IC III) the phrase *travan ver* was rendered by Cœdès as ‘otter pond’, whereas it should be ‘double pond’. In K 1 (IC VI), which is closely related to K 22, he left the same phrase, and *ralon ver*, ‘two channels’ untranslated; but in another contribution to IC VI, K 903, he called attention to PA Khm. *ver* as the regular equivalence of Angkorian (post-800 AD) *vyar* ‘two’; and in his work on K 388/389 he translated *damrin ver* as ‘two plantations’. One other context which he did not translate, but in which the sense of *ver* as ‘two’ can hardly be in doubt, is K 664, *cpar ver*, ‘two orchards’.<sup>3</sup>

One impediment to the correct appreciation of ‘*ver*’ has been confusion with respect to *ver* and *ver(a)*. ‘*Vera*’, modern /ven/, occurs in at least two Angkor inscriptions with the meaning ‘turn’, ‘shift’ in work, as night and day shift, which

<sup>1</sup> JA 1984, pp. 171–91, translated quotations respectively from pp. 181 and 188.

<sup>2</sup> See G. Cœdès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (IC) tome V, pp. 7–8.

<sup>3</sup> See K 22, “Stèle de Vat Pô”, IC III:143–7; K 1, “Stèle de Vat Thleñ”, IC VI:28–30; K 388/389, “Piliers de Hin K’ôn”, IC VI:73–9; K 664, “Stèle de Sambuor”, IC V:69–70. Jenner, in CPAK, IV, published in 1982, pp. 288, 495, agreed on the construal of these occurrences of ‘*ver*’ as ‘2’. J.M. Jacob, in her “Notes on the Numerals and Numeral Coefficients in Old, Middle and Modern Khmer”, p. 51, did not recognize *ver* as ‘two’, and treated only *vyar* as both Pre-Angkor and Angkor ‘two’, although *vyar* does not occur in PA texts.

Cœdès translated as “service de nuit et de jour”.<sup>4</sup> This practice is not recorded in the pre-Angkor corpus. There are, however, occurrences of *vera* in pre-Angkor inscriptions, which must be construed as representing *ver* ‘two’, although Cœdès did not recognize them as such, for otherwise the contexts are incoherent. In Khmer script the error was easy, for the distinction is only presence or absence of the *virāma*, a line above the *-r-* in *ver*. Its absence where it is expected may not always be attributed to weathered stones, for in at least one case, K 154, the *virāma* is clearly visible on words surrounding the controversial *vera*, even on photocopies of the published reproduction of the rubbing.<sup>5</sup>

In K 51 the term written there appears to be *vera*, but as Cœdès remarked, “it is hard to see how this meaning [‘service’, ‘shift’] may be fitted with the context.” It seems rather that *vera* in this case should be interpreted as *ver* ‘two’, and the phrase *kamratān añ ta vera* as ‘the two gods’.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, K 154A contains a list of offerings, of which the last is *samlo vnāk vera*, followed by the listing of *kñum* (laborers).<sup>7</sup> Cœdès broke the phrase and translated “1 ensemble de mets [*samlo vnāk*]; le service [*vera*] des esclaves [*kñum*] ...;” but he was forced to insert the number 1, which is normally included in such enumerations; and there is no context anywhere in which a ‘shift, or service, of personnel’ is expressed as *vera kñum*. In K 154B, in a perfectly parallel context, there is *samlo vnāk l*, followed by listing of quantities of cloth which in A preceded the mention of *samlo*. Here there can be no doubt about “one set of food”, followed by a listing of cloth, cattle, and orchards. Based on this the phrase in part A should be translated “two sets of food.”

One more context is K 30, the next to last line (1.29), in a list enumerating offerings similar to those in K 154, *ampel vera moy*, rendered as “a vera [shift?] of salt,” which Cœdès, p. 28, n. 7 acknowledged to be devoid of sense, since “the term seems to designate a measure.” I suggest that *vera moy*, in a list of goods and materials listed by quantity, should be construed as ‘two one’, meaning either a numerical quantity or, as Cœdès suggested, a measure which was designated by the number ‘two’. Similarly, K 689, which Cœdès did not translate, has *ver bhay*, in which the second term means ‘twenty’, thus either ‘22’ or ‘40’, or perhaps ‘twenty twos [a measure]’.<sup>8</sup>

It would appear that because the practice of assigning personnel and officials to serve by shifts was not followed in pre-Angkor foundations, scribes did not always take care to inscribe *ver* ‘two’ with the correct *virāma*. In fact the term ‘*vera*’, ‘shift’, may not have been usual in the pre-Angkor southern dialect.<sup>9</sup> In the

<sup>4</sup> In the “Stèle de Prāsāt Beñ”, *IC* VII:164–89, see p. 188. The other inscription in which *vera* may be construed as “service” is K 258, “Stèle de Saṃroñ”, *IC* IV:175–205.

<sup>5</sup> K 154, *IC* II:123–5.

<sup>6</sup> *IC* IV:14–6.

<sup>7</sup> I disagree with the traditional interpretation of ‘*kñum*’ as slaves, but discussion is not relevant here.

<sup>8</sup> Inscription K 30, ... was published in *IC* II:26–8; and K 689, “Stèle de Vat Pô Rôn”, in *IC* VI:47–8. Jenner, *CPAK*, IV, p.374, glossed *ver bhay* as “two score, forty”.

<sup>9</sup> It is rare even in the Angkor corpus, where the sense ‘shift’, ‘service’ is certain, and may represent a very restricted concept or practice.

Angkor dialect there was no possibility of confusion, because of the different form of 'two', *vyar*.

Returning to Jenner's problem, another early, probably Angkorian, example of a number expressed in the same manner as in K 76 is in K 389.C.5, *pi dan tap* '13', showing the modern development of final dental nasal in the conjunction.<sup>10</sup> Cœdès did not translate this phrase in a badly damaged passage, but there can be little doubt about its meaning, which Jenner has accepted, particularly as the inscription contains several numbers in lists of property of the foundation.<sup>11</sup>

The evidence of K 389 is that already in Angkor times the final velar nasal of the conjunction *dan* had assimilated to the dental nasal preceding /dʔap/ (*tap*), another detail implicitly acknowledged by Jenner, who analyzed *dan* in K 389 as "[for dan /dʔon/ before *tap*]".<sup>12</sup>

Jenner's treatment of *dan/dan* in "Les noms de nombre" was peculiar because just two years earlier, in his *CPAK*, IV, he had considered them as two forms of the conjunction 'and', 'with'; and there is no reference to this, nor explanation of his apparent change of view in the later publication. The opinion expressed there must certainly be rejected, for the PA contexts cited above substantiate the status of *dan/dan* in numbers expressing teens as a form already current in PA Khmer and which has been preserved to the present time.

This evidence not only contradicts Jenner's analysis in "Les noms de nombre", but also casts doubt on one of his theories of derivation, that concerning "primary reduplicated derivation". At least the example \*/dʔap/, and the hypothetical "[*taʔa'pa* /dʔap/ ten by ten, ten at a time.]" adduced in *LKM*:97, where Jenner treated /dʔandʔap/ in still another way, as a "bound form occurring only in the formation of numerals from eleven to nineteen", must be withdrawn from circulation.

27 May 1992

Universiti Sains Malaysia  
School of Humanities  
11800 Penang  
Malaysia

<sup>10</sup> G. Cœdès, "Piliers de Hin K'on" *JC* VI:73-9. Although K 388/9, undated, have been accepted by Jacob and Jenner as PA texts, they contain the royal names Indravarman and Soryavarman which, as Cœdès noted, seem suspiciously Angkorian; another name, Nṛpendrādhīpativarman, is of a type found nowhere in the PA corpus but common in Angkor records; and K 388 contains the title *sten* which is exclusively Angkorian. These inscriptions probably represent an isolated local dialect, and this supposition is reinforced by the presence of Mon loans, in particular the title *kyāk* equivalent to Khmer *vraḥ*. See Jacob, "Pre-Angkor Cambodia: evidence from the inscriptions in Khmer concerning the common people and their environment", in R.B. Smith and W. Watson, eds., *Early South East Asia, Essays in Archaeology, History, and Historical Geography*, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 420; Jenner, *CPAK*, IV, p.222. In an earlier work, "The Khmer inscriptions of Tenasserim: a reinterpretation", *JSS*, 1973, 61.1:51-70 [here pp. 65-7], I also accepted the erroneous pre-Angkor dating, which, however, does not affect my conclusions in that article.

<sup>11</sup> Jenner, *CPAK*, IV, p.205.

<sup>12</sup> Jenner, *CPAK*, IV, p.270.