Linguistic exchanges between Chinese and Khmer from Prehistory to Modern Cambodia

By Andrew Allard

Abstract:

Cambodia’s unique position, being historically under the Indian sphere of influence, and in its later history being influenced by China, resulted in lexical borrowing from both Sanskrit and Chinese in Khmer. While borrowing from Sanskrit has long been a popular topic of Khmer studies, the relationship between Khmer and Chinese remains under-examined. Thus, using the historical framework of contact between Cambodia and China as evidence, this paper will analyze lexical similarities between Chinese and Khmer to demonstrate borrowing from Chinese to Khmer, both directly and indirectly, throughout their history.

Keywords: Chinese linguistics, Southeast Asian linguistics, Khmer studies, Loanwords, Phonology, Sociolinguistics