

# Affixes in Katu of the Lao P.D.R.

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## 0. Introduction

Katu is a Mon-Khmer language spoken by approximately 37,000 people in Vietnam and by 15,000 people in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In Vietnam the Katu live in Quảng Nam and Thừa Thiên provinces and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic they are across the border from Quảng Nam, mainly in Kalum district in Xe Kong province, as well as in Salavan province.

The variety of Katu spoken in the Lao P.D.R. (hereafter referred to as Katu-L) has a number of affixes, both prefixes and infixes, occurring mainly on verb roots, but also on noun roots and numerals. Some of the affixes are the same as those in the Katu dialect in Vietnam (hereafter referred to as Katu-VN) which are described in Costello, 1966. In doing research on Katu-L while living in the Lao P.D.R. for the past four years, I have found some affix forms which are quite different from those observed in Katu-VN. For example, in the Katu-L there are no combinations of prefixes.

## 1. Words and presyllables

A word in Katu-L allows a maximum of two syllables instead of four as in Katu-VN. The main syllable may consist of C1C2V, CV, VC, or C1C2VC3. A simple C-initial may be filled by any initial consonant, while C1 in a C1C2 cluster has some limitations. The C2 slot is filled by only /r/ or /l/. The following consonant clusters have been found: /br, bl, chr, kr, kl, pr, pl, phr, sr, tr/.

Examples of simple main syllable words are:

C1C2V	tri	'mushroom'
C1V	chô	'to return'
VC	aas	'empty, clean'
C1C2VC3	krôôs	'to scrape' <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Costello, Nancy A. and Khamluan Sulavan *MKS* 26:233-244 for details on Katu-L phonology and/or orthography questions. All Katu forms cited in the present paper appear in Romanized (Quốc ngữ) symbols with the following phonetic values:

The presyllable may consist of C1VC2 or C1V or C1C2V or V or VC.

A C1VC2 presyllable in Katu-L may take such shapes as /bar, kar, mar, pan, par, phar, sar, tar, thar, var/, none of which were recorded in Katu-VN.

barbook	'monkey'
sarnu	'wedding feast in groom's village'
karluh	'quickly'
marmông	'way of life'
tarngou	'resting place'
pandil	'woman'
varvaai	'carefully, slowly'
parlaai	'medicine'
pharngơ	'character'

A C1V presyllable in Katu-L may include for example, /ba, cha, ka, la, ma, sa, ta, ya/ presyllables which are also used in Katu-VN. By contrast, the following presyllables are peculiar to Katu-L: /chi, li, mi, ni, pi, ri, si/, as in:

chichuô	'toss from side to side'
pilang	'sweet potato'
riram	'dance (women) with hands raised'
liplứng	'swollen'
mimê	'hives'
sise	'vein, artery'
nikluôk niplứn	'all over'

A C1C2V presyllable may occur as /pra/ or /tra/:

prapro	'stupid'
tratriế	'to curse'

A V presyllable is filled by /a/ or /i/, the latter not being used in Vietnam, but quite common in Katu-L.

romanized transcription: (Quốc ngữ)

ê [e]	ô [o]	ư [u]	
e [ɛ]	o [ɔ]	ơ [ɤ]	â [ə]
ch [tʃ]	ó [ɒ]	nh [ɲ]	
d [d]	đ [ʔd]	dy [ʔy]	

abưok	'branch'
imiing	'brother'
achuui	'small waist basket'
ivir	'a charm'

A VC presyllable involves a vowel plus a nasal, or /r/, for example /am, ang, an, ar/. In Katu-VN only a syllabic nasal is used in a parallel way.

ambaang	'season, elements'
antâi	'different'
anghut	'a forge'
arngoom	'sweet (words)'

Some examples of maximum word forms are:

tarklaach	'light shining' (where /tar/ is a prefix)
pharlaang	'bad luck' (where /phar/ is a presyllable)
tritraas	'wipe to chase spirits away' (where /tri/ is a prefix)

## 2. Inflexional affixes on verb roots

### 2.1 Causative prefixes

As in Katu-VN, /pa/ is the most common causative prefix in the Katu-L, but /pi/, /ka/, and /ta/ also occur. They occur on intransitive, transitive, and stative verbs.

/pa/ occurs with intransitive verbs, as in:

chô	'to return'	pachô	'to give back'
nââs	'to swell'	panââs	'cause to swell'
siêr	'to come down'	pasiêr	'cause to come down'
tâng	'to stand'	patâng	'cause to stand'
vaas	'to exist'	pavaas	'to create'
vôôch	'to go'	pavôôch	'cause to go'
yuur	'to rise'	payur	'cause to rise'

Two examples from texts are as follows in (1) and (2). (citations from Sulavan and Costello 1994 and 1995)

(1) *dyaang patâng đaaui* 'the *dyaang* spirits caused the knife (*đaaui*) to stand up (in the dish of rice).'

(2) *ngaai pasiêr kuru* 'someone (*ngaai*) caused (the *dyaang* spirits) to come down onto the shamaness (*kuru*).'

/pa/ may be affixed to transitive verbs, as follows.

siêl	'to trim'	pasiêl	'cause to trim'
tenh	'to hammer'	patenh	'cause to hammer'
trôh	'to fill'	patrôh	'cause to fill'
yê	'to finish'	payê	'cause to finish'

(3) *đó patrôh aro long trul* 'he (đó) filled up the storage house (trul) with rice (aro).'

/pa/ also appears with stative verbs, such as:

ayuôq	'to be sour'	payuôq	'to make sour'
chên	'to be cooked'	pachên	'to cook'
diêng	'to be taboo'	padiêng	'to make taboo'
luôs	'to be free'	paluôs	'to set free'
ngân	'to be warm'	pangân	'to make warm'
triêt	'to be cold'	patriêt	'to make cold'
yơơh	'to be cured'	payơơh	'to cure'
đâh	'to be quick'	pađâh	'to cause to be quick'
jih	'to be slow'	pajih	'to cause to be slow'
triêq	'to be difficult'	patriêq	'to cause difficulty'
phiich	'to suffer'	paphiich	'to cause suffering'

(4) *ku patriêt đăak* 'I (ku) made the water (đăak) cool.'

(5) *brau patriêq takuui a-ai* 'the brau spirits cause difficulty to sick people.'

The causative prefix /pi/, not used in Katu-VN, appears in forms like the following in Katu-L.

tor	'to go around'	pitor	'cause to go round'
rau pitor	'environment' lit. 'things which go round'		

It can also occur with a stative verb:

kre	'to be right'	pikre	'to make right'
klêk	'to be clear'	piklêk	'to cause to be clear'
krâs	'to be large'	pikrâs	'to cause to be large'

(6) *dyaang kre loom* 'the *dyaang* spirits feel right inside/in their livers (loom)

(7) *takuui pikre dyaang* 'people (takuui) cause the *dyaang* spirits to feel right in their insides' (by performing rituals)

(8) *ngaai pi kaang piklêk đóng ve takuui tung sêng* ‘someone spoke causing the words (kaang) to be clear so the deaf (takuui tung) could hear’

The prefix /ka/ seems to have a causative effect on certain stative verbs in Katu-L, but not with the meaning of purpose that it has in Katu-VN, for example in the following forms and (9).

siêt	‘to be near’	kasiêt	‘to oppress’
yông	‘to be long’	kayông	‘to make long’
nhaanh	‘to chew’	kanhaanh	‘make to chew’

(9) *ve ngaai kasiêt takuui Katu* ‘others (ve ngaai) oppressed the Katu’

The causative prefix /ta/ is found in Katu-L as well as in Katu-VN, on transitive, intransitive, and stative verbs, as illustrated in the following forms:

roh	‘to burn’	taroh	‘to cause to burn’
bôn	‘to get, catch’	tabôn	‘cause to catch’
kuuk	‘to wear necklace’	takuuk	‘cause to wear’
đơq	‘to step on’	tadơq	‘cause to step on’
mot	‘to enter’	tamot	‘cause to enter’
pong	‘to go down’	tapong	‘cause to go down’
lot	‘to be wrong’	talot	‘to cause wrong’
môôp	‘to be bad’	tamôôp	‘to cause bad to’

(10) *ôs taroh arus* ‘the fire (ôs) causes the jungle (arus) to burn.’

(11) *brau tamôôp takuui* ‘the brau spirits do bad to people.’

## 2.2 Reciprocal prefix

The prefix /tar/ sometimes has a reciprocal meaning, and sometimes it is used on verbs which convey a mutuality of activity but which may not necessarily be strictly reciprocal. The Katu say that /tar/ reciprocal prefix is related to the word /tar/ which refers to the shoulder straps on a back basket. Just as there must be two back straps, so /tar/ with a verb conveys the meaning of reciprocity. For example:

puơch	‘to sprinkle’	tarpuơch	‘sprinkle on each other’
lot	‘to do wrong’	tarlot	‘wrong each other’
niin	‘to do sexual wrong’	tarniin	‘do sexual wrong together’
yêêl	‘to disagree’	taryêêl	‘argue together’
niik	‘to work’	tarniik	‘work together’
kuôl	‘to replace’	tarkuôl	‘to exchange’

(12) *baar lương tarpưoch đaaak* ‘the two sides (in a dispute) (baar lương) sprinkle water on each other to set matters right’

Examples of /tar/ with a non reciprocal but sequential meaning are:

tarphoq ‘pass on to following generations’  
tartong ‘one after the other’ (of people walking)

(13) *takuui ahôn tarphoq tamiêng tók paang ipe* ‘people in ancient time (ahôn) passed (tarphoq) the traditions (tamiêng) on up to your generation’

/tar/ may also have a passive or resultative meaning.

luk ‘to mix’                          tarluk ‘mixed together’

(14) *ve arhau arus tarluk lơng đaaak* ‘there is jungle medicine (ve arhau arus) mixed together with (tarluk) water’

### 3 Nominalizers

#### 3.1 Prefixes

Interestingly, only nominalizing infixes are used in Katu-VN, whereas in Katu-L nominalizing prefixes are also quite common. One of the most common prefixes is /phar/. Less commonly found, are /ar/, /an/, /tar/, /tri/, /i/, /am/ and /ang/.

#### Nominalizer prefix /phar/

In most cases, the derived noun is the result of the action performed, or that which is acted upon, the direct object of the root action, as in the following pairs:

vôôch	‘to go’	pharvôôch	‘behaviour’
cha	‘to eat’	pharcha	‘something eaten’
châng	‘to use’	pharchâng	‘something used’
laat	‘to make a sign’	pharlaat	‘a sign’
rap	‘perform ritual’	pharrap	‘ritual’
dưử	‘to use’	phardử	‘something used’
at	‘to remain’	pharat	‘place to remain’
nôh	‘to name’	pharnôh	‘name’
haanh	‘to create a situation’	pharhaanh	‘situation’
lớh	‘to go outside’	pharlớh	‘doorway’
yườm	‘to borrow’	pharyườm	‘something borrowed’
chóóm	‘to be able’	pharchóóm	‘teaching, education’
đông	‘to bring’	phardông	‘something brought’

lin	'to play'	pharlin	'toy'
ngiês	'to count'	pharngiês	'counting system'
hêk	'to lose'	pharhêk	'something lost'
las	'to make notch on tree'	pharlas	'a notch on tree'
chah	'to chop'	pharchah	'something chopped'
huôt	'to steam'	pharhuôt	'a steamer (leaves or bamboo tube)'
mamông	'to be alive'	pharmông	'livelihood'

The last example above is different to the other examples because /phar/ replaces an existing presyllable /ma/.

Katu-L borrows words from Lao and adds a Katu prefix to make them Katu words. For example:

hiên	'to study' (Lao)	pharhiên	'study, education'
chut	'to make comma' (Lao)	pharchut	'comma' (Katu-L)
lôp	'minus' (Lao)	pharlôp	'minus' (Katu-L)
haan	'to divide' (Lao)	pharhaan	'division' (Katu-L)

(15) *ve pharhaanh ihôn takuui Katu tapơơh kuru* 'there was the situation (pharhaanh) in ancient time when the Katu called on (tapơơh) the shamaness.'

In the following examples, /phar/ derives a noun as the instrument used to perform the action:

laai	'to rub on'	pharlaai	'medicine'
phuôq	'to carry child in front'	pharnuôq	'something used to carry child'

(16) *ve pharlai arus, ve pharlaai luông* 'there is jungle (arus) medicine and manufactured (luông) medicine.'

Nominalizer prefix /ar/.

a	'to judge'	ara	'judgment'
kâl	'to exchange'	arkâl	'goods exchanged'
oop	'to wrap'	aroop	'wrapping'
chuh	'to blow on (to kill)'	archuh	'the blowing on (to kill)'
teek	'to break'	arteek	'breakage'

(17) *ihôn Katu ve chóóm tak archuh* 'in ancient time the Katu could do the blowing on people (to kill them).'

There is also a Katu-L example of the prefix /ar/ being added to a verb with a /mi/ presyllable, in which case the original presyllable is dropped:

mimư̄l ‘to perform ritual with rice and sword’      armư̄l ‘ritual with rice and sword’

(18) *te la yum toong tak armư̄l pe chu* ‘for three nights they must perform the rice and sword ritual three times’

Nominalizer prefix /an/ occurs in the following form:

suô̄r ‘to relate story’      ansuô̄r ‘folktale, story’

(19) *ikônh ikan pi ansuô̄r lông ikóón* ‘the fathers and mothers (ikônh ikan) tell stories to their children (ikoon).’

Nominalizer prefix /tar/ is illustrated as follows:

nil ‘to make a pattern’      tarnil ‘a pattern’

(20) *pandil taanh ayôôh ve tarnil* ‘the women (pandil) weave (taanh) skirts with patterns’

Nominalizer prefix /tri/ occurs in such cases as:

trô̄s ‘to chase spirits away’      tritrô̄s ‘chasing away of spirits’  
traas ‘to wipe spirits away’      tritraas ‘the wiping away of spirits’

(21) *rau đôông lông tritraas lông karai ve asaai* ‘the things to bring (đôông) for the wiping away of pains (karai) are ginger (etc.)’

Nominalizer prefix /i/ is illustrated in the following forms and (19):

lêh ‘to free’      ilêh ‘the freeing’  
hai ‘to remember’      ihai ‘regret’

(22) *kah ve biik ihai* ‘there is no regret’

Nominalizer prefix /am/ appears in several examples changing a stative verb into a noun.

baat ‘to be very sick’      ambaat ‘serious sickness’  
bes ‘to have bad luck’      ambes ‘bad luck’

(23) *kuru pi ambes chak kah ve idié̄l* ‘the shamaness says (kuru pi) there is bad luck in the body (ames chak) because he does not have a wife.’

There is one example of the nominalizer /ang/ as follows:



kuôt ‘to tie knot’                      angkuôt ‘a knot’

(24) *mai kuôt angkuôt karmu* ‘you tie the knot with rope’

### 3.2 Infixes

A number of nominalizing infixes are used on Katu-L verbs, the most common being /an/ and /a/, just as in Katu-VN. Katu-L, however, has /r/ and /arn/ infixes. Usually the derived noun is the result of the action performed, the direct object of the root action, but sometimes the derived noun with the infix /an/ has the meaning of location, the place where the action was performed.

Nominalizer infix /an/ is exemplified in the following sets:

kui	‘to carry on back’	kanui	‘something carried on back’
tôl	‘to put post in’	tanôl	‘post’
pó	‘to dream’	panó	‘a dream’
kuôl	‘to have resources, strength’	kanuôl	‘resources, strength’
puưk	‘to make dry rice field’	panuưk	‘dry rice field’
têeng	‘to work’	tanêeng	‘work’
phaar	‘to feed animal’	phanaar	‘food given to animal’
koł	‘to make notch in tree’	kanol	‘notch in tree’
pók	‘to make idol’	panók	‘idol’
cai	‘to judge’	canai	‘judgment’
chiêm	‘to feed animal’	chaniêm	‘food given to animal’
kuuk	‘to wear necklace’	kanuuk	‘necklace’
kuôh	‘to chop branch’	kanuôh	‘notch in branch’
pooi	‘to give bride price’	panooi	‘bride price given by boy’s family’

(25) *tak e panok te tapat tok takiês sôl* ‘they made many idols (panok), from six to nine ‘slaves (sôl).’

Nominalizer infix /a/ is the alternate used instead of /an/ when it splits consonant clusters such as: /kl/, /kr/, /pl/, /phr/, /pr/, /tr/:

kluong	‘to make bare’	kaluong	‘bare’
kloos	‘to exchange’	kaloos	‘an exchange’
klân	‘make period, stage’	kalân	‘period, stage’
klam	‘make tree shrine’	kalam	‘tree shrine’
klân	‘to block road with tree’	kalân	‘a blockade (placed by spirits)’
klaanh	‘weave pattern’	kalaanh	‘woven pattern’
kluop	‘make patch’	kaluop	‘patch’

klui	'to be crazy'	kalui	'craziness'
kroong	'make fence'	karoong	'fence'
plah	'to divide'	palah	'division'
preeng	'to exchange food (of brother and sister)'	pareeng	'food exchanged between brother and sister'
três	'make small slit'	tarês	'small slit'
truôi	'apply poultice'	taruôi	'poultice'
trooq	'make enclosure'	tarooq	'enclosure'

(26) *cheenh chô kraang lờng kalam toong đook klam* 'all (the animals) they carry to the spirit tree shrines, they must send the animals' souls into the tree (klam).'

(27) *Katu katas tak taruôi truôi payơơh apês* 'we Katu call it (katas) making a poultice (tak taruôi) to put on (truôi) to cure scabies'

Sometimes the derived noun has the meaning of the place where the action is performed, as in the following instances:

chô	'to return'	chanô	'road'
pua	'to make offerings at shrines'	panua	'shrines for offerings'
pleh	'to turn on road'	paleh	'crossroads'
praang	'to cross bridge'	paraang	'bridge'

(28) *kuru pi dyaang saq panua tak pe a-ai* 'the shamaness (kuru) said the *dyaang* spirits and local spirits (saq) of the shrines (panua) made you (pl.) (pe) sick'

Nominalizer infix /r/ occurs in cases such as:

alôm	'to offer gift'	arlôm	'gift offered'
achơng	'to make armspread measure'	archơng	'armspread measure'
kachêt	'to kill'	karchêt	'dead'
achưưng	'to advise'	archưưng	'advice'
achia	'to give'	archia	'things given'
kanoq	'to think'	karnoq	'thinking'
tapưưng	'to put roof on'	tarưưng	'roof'
mamông	'to be alive'	marmông	'characteristics of life'
saveeng	'to be between'	sarveeng	'place between'
katas	'to name'	kartas	'name'
tatóng	'go one after the other'	tartóng	'one after the other'
kachiit	'to be shy'	karchiit	'shyness'

(29) *dyaang siêr pi lờng tak archơng* 'the *dyaang* spirits come down (siêr) and speak about doing the armspread measure (tak archơng).'

There is one example of the nominalizer infix /ar/ splitting a consonant cluster.

phlâi	'to buy'	pharlâi	'something bought'
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(30) *pantrus kanoq pandil rau pharlâi* 'men (pantrus) think of the women (pandil) as something bought'

There are several examples of the nominalizer infix /arn/.

tôôp	'to begin'	tarnôôp	'beginning'
teh	'to hammer'	tarneh	'hammer'

(31) *tarnôôp bôh kikul* 'in the beginning she (shamaness) burns (bôh) incense'

#### 4. Verbalizers on noun roots

The prefixes /pi/, /pa/, /ta/, and /ka/ occur on Katu-L noun roots, producing derived verbs. In Katu-VN /pa/, /ha/ and /ta/ prefixes are used.

Verbalizer prefix /pi/ occurs with such noun roots as:

soh	'lung'	pisoh	'to make alive'
pharhôôm	'breath'	pihôôm	'to breath'

(32) *takuui chóóm ve pisoh va amông* 'the person is able (to cause lungs) (ve pisoh) and to be alive (amông).

Verbalizer prefix /pa/ derives the following forms:

yaq	'self'	payaq	'commit suicide'
saq	'local spirit'	pasaq	'cause local spirits to exist in trees'
yum	'night'	payum	'do for a night'

(33) *takuui Katu ihôn tak pasaq tôôm doong* 'Katu in ancient time (ihôn) caused there to be local spirits (pasaq) in trees'

Verbalizer prefix /ta/ is exemplified in such forms as:

hâm	'shade'	tahâm	'to shade'
lâp	'wound'	talâp	'to wound'

(34) *ndoong tahâm yeel* 'the tree shaded the village'

Verbalizer prefix produces the following verbs:

bôq	'a pile'	kabôq	'to make a pile'
vương	'a circle'	kavương	'to circle'

(35) *karoong kavương veel* 'the fence circles the village'

The following examples do not fit the regular patterns for the use of affixes.

a-ai	'pain'	karai	'symptom'
taklah	'piece of woven cloth'	tarklah	'many pieces of woven cloth'

(36) *viil Thông Vaai ve tâch tarklah lông viil kano* 'Thong Vaai village sold (tâch) many pieces of cloth to other villages'

Verbalizer prefix /pi/

klêk	'clear'	piklêk	'cause to be clear'
krâs	'large'	pikrâs	'cause to be large'

(37) *ngaai pi kaang piklêk đống ve takuui tung sêng* 'someone spoke causing the words (*kaang*) to be clear (*piklêk*) so the deaf (*tung*) person could hear'

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Received: 22 August 1996

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