

BOOK REVIEWS

Yasuyuki SAKAMOTO. *The Cambodian-Japanese Dictionary.* Tokyo: Institute of the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2001. 3:175 pp.

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The dictionary, published in 2001, is arranged according to the Khmer alphabetical system and divided into 3 volumes: Volume 1 (from រ៉ to ឡ), Volume II (from ឺ to ឺ) and Volume III (ឺ from to ឺ). The dictionary, Volumes I-III, totals 3,175 pages and may be considered the most comprehensive Cambodian dictionary ever published.

The introductory section, pages i-x, gives the background of the dictionary in 6 topics and several sub-topics. This section provides very useful information, especially on the Khmer linguistics and also provides a list of books (in English, Japanese, Khmer, French and Thai) used in the compilation of this dictionary.

Lexical items, arranged according to Khmer alphabetical system, are given first with the main head lexical item, provided with the IPA transcription, and followed by the lexical items which occur in the different showing to show the usage of such lexical item. The explanation is given in Japanese. The lexical items are repeated in different sections and contents for convenience adding to the number of pages and resulting in a 3 volume set which is easy to search for Khmer lexical items.

The phonetic transcription, given in IPA for each head lexical item, is helpful for users who study Khmer to pronounce the Khmer word correctly.

Lexical items cover all aspects of the Khmer people's way of life, such as social, economic, political, ecological aspects. The lexical items for 'nut', written as <ណ្ហ> in Khmer (see Volume III, pages 615-617), is a good example. The lexical item is given its usage in different contexts. It not only helps the users easily check the Khmer lexical items, but also helps understand the lexical item in relation to Cambodian social, economic, political, ecological aspects. They are typed using beautifully designed Khmer fonts; and are easy to read and to check for the Khmer spelling.

However, the situation in Cambodia is changing so fast that many invented lexical items have been introduced, especially since the 1990s when UNITED NATIONS TRANSITIONAL AUTHORITY IN CAMBODIA UNITED (UNTAC) (February 1992 - September 1993) came to operate in Cambodia. Thus, the dictionary may not have been able to include all the new innovations. Some lexical items may not be found in the dictionary, such as: ឈូសឆាយ ‘the cleared land’ is not found. Minor mistakes due to printing errors for Thai words do occur, such as:

จพาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย (page x)

The dictionary can be considered the most up-to-date Khmer dictionary. It is one of the most reliable sources for Khmer spelling, and one of the best dictionaries for Khmer language study. It is helpful for both Khmer and Japanese studies. The dictionary is very helpful to Japanese students learning Khmer, and is also helpful for Khmer students learning Japanese as well.

Received: 10 September 2007

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