



**HAL**  
open science

## **/k lah/ IN CONTEMPORARY KHMER**

Joseph Thach, Denis Paillard

► **To cite this version:**

Joseph Thach, Denis Paillard. /k lah/ IN CONTEMPORARY KHMER. Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society, 2010, 3 (2), pp.93-110. hal-00723646

**HAL Id: hal-00723646**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00723646>**

Submitted on 12 Aug 2012

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

## **klah** IN CONTEMPORARY KHMER

### Quantitative and qualitative plurality

Joseph D. Thach  
(SEDYL, INALCO – CNRS – IRD)  
Denis Paillard  
(LLF, Paris Diderot University)

#### Abbreviation

DEICT.:	Deixis, or demonstrative
NEG.:	Negation
PART.	Particles
1SG.	1 <sup>st</sup> person of singular personal pronoun
2SG.	2 <sup>nd</sup> person of singular personal pronoun
3SG	3 <sup>rd</sup> person of singular personal pronoun
S <sub>0</sub> / S1	Speaker/Addressee

The present paper deals with **klah** in contemporary Khmer. In the existing grammars and manuals (such as Gorgonief (1966), Huffman (1970), Khin Sok (2000)), **klah** is described as an indefinite pronoun and often considered (at least in translations) as the equivalent of *some* in English. However, as we will demonstrate below – through a semantic analysis of its uses and values –, **klah** has its own syntactic and semantic values, distinct from those of *some*, and is a marker of plurality (it should be recalled that in Khmer the number category is not morphologically marked). For this reason, our study of **klah** will come within the framework of a wider discussion about the notion of plurality in Khmer (also linked to nominal and adjectival reduplication<sup>1</sup>).

Our paper endeavors to describe all the uses and values of **klah** without any exclusion. Firstly, it deals with the cases where **klah** is combined with a (count or mass) N. For these two categories of N, we will show that **klah** comes under two interpretations: a partition of all the instances of the N; b. the construction of a set of singular instances of the N. Secondly, we will study the cases where **klah** relates to a V and constructs various instances of this V. As regards reduplication, we will distinguish between two cases: a. **klah** in case of reduplication of the N; b. and **klah** reduplicated and introducing the notion of *vagueness*; compare:

(1) **cam**        **klah**  
remember    **klah**  
“I clearly remember some of the things”

(2) **cam**        **klah**    **klah**  
remember    **klah**    **klah**  
“I faintly remember some of the things/a few things now and then”

---

<sup>1</sup> On reduplication in keeping with plurality, see Paillard (2009)

We will close our study with the analysis of cases where **klah** is combined with the indefinites/interrogatives **?ey** and **naa**. In this respect, we will point out a difference of behaviour. With **?ey**, **klah** can only stand in postposition and **?ey** is an interrogative<sup>2</sup>:

- (3) **praacum prik mij kee ni?yiey pii riəŋ ?ey Klah**  
 meeting morning DEICT people talk about story **?ey Klah**  
 “Which were the topics broached during this morning meeting?”

With **naa**, **klah** can stand either in ante-position (**naa** is an indefinite: example (4)) or in postposition (**naa** is an interrogative: example (5)):

- (4) **niw knoŋ p<sup>h</sup>uum nih klah naa ?at teaŋ ?aŋkaa**  
 Be In village DEICT **klah Naa** NEG. PART. Rice  
**hoop p<sup>h</sup>aaŋ**  
 Eat PART.

“In this village, some inhabitants (whom I cannot or don’t want to point out) don’t even have rice to eat”

- (5) **praacum prik mij kee ni?yiey pii riəŋ naa klah**  
 Meeting morning DEICT people talk about story **naa klah**  
 “Among the topics on the agenda, which ones have actually been discussed this morning?”

The analysis of these various uses will allow us to verify our hypothesis on **klah** as a marker of **quantitative and qualitative plurality**.

The examples used in this paper were constructed by us (native speakers) or heard in daily conversations. All these examples were checked by ten native speakers of different social origins (students, teachers, actors, moto-taxi drivers).

In order to discuss the various uses of **klah**, we will use the notion of *plurality*, but with a meaning different from that usually given to this notion, especially when referring to the number category in languages where the opposition singular vs plural is morphologically marked. In their article entitled *The semantics and pragmatics of plurals* (2008), D. Farkas and H. de Swart give the following definition of the opposition between singular and plural: « *singular nominals take values from the domain of atoms; plural nominals take values from the domain of sum* ». In this view, the singular / plural opposition comes down to « *atomic vs sum reference* », in other words to a purely quantitative matter. Following M. Jarrega works on the plural in French, a different characterization of plural can be given (Paillard, 2006) associating both *quantitative and qualitative information*, as shown by the following representation: **X ( x<sub>i</sub> .... x<sub>k</sub> ..... x<sub>n</sub> ...)**

---

<sup>2</sup> About **naa** and **?ey** see Thach (2007).

- **quantitative component (Qnt)**. **X** corresponds to a given but not explicit quantity of instances of the category associated to the N under plural. In order to characterize this quantity, we will resort to the expression *inclusive plural*, adopted by several authors. *Inclusive plural* is neutral as regards the « atomic vs. sum reference » distinction (see - *Do you have **children**? – Yes, one daughter*);
- **qualitative component (Qlt)**. The instances  $x_1 \dots x_k \dots x_n$  of the category N are differentiated from each other, the criteria of differentiation being left unspecified (Lasersohn, 1995).

This definition for plurality agrees with that given by R. Jackendoff (1991) as “an aggregate of distinguishable individuals” (aggregate: **X**, distinguishable individuals:  $x_1 \dots x_k \dots x_n$ ).

Our hypothesis on **klah** is the following: **klah** is a marker of *inclusive plurality* actualizing both components: the quantitative (**Qnt**) and the qualitative (**Qlt**).

### 1. $N_{\text{count}}$ + **klah**

**klah** with a *count noun* as its scope comes under a partition principle: **klah** refers to a subset of instances of the category N, fitting a differential property. **klah** never reduces to refer to a plain *sum*. This can clearly be shown through a comparison between NPs formed by N + **klah** and those formed by N + **muøy camnuən**:

(6a) **mɔ̀ək cuəp kɲom muøy pʰlɛt baan tee kɲom mien**  
 Come meet 1SG. One moment possible PART. 1SG. have  
**riəŋ klah trəw niʔyiey**  
 Story **klah** Must Talk

“Could you come and see me for a short while? I have things to talk (to you)”

(6b) **mɔ̀ək cuəp kɲom muøy pʰlɛt baan tee kɲom mien**  
 come Meet 1SG. One moment possible PART. 1SG. Have  
**riəŋ muøy- trəw niʔyiey**  
**camnuən**  
 story **muøy-** must Talk  
**camnuən**

“Could you come and see me for a short while? I have a number (a series) of points to discuss”

(6c) **mɔ̀ək cuəp kɲom muøy pʰlɛt baan tee kɲom mien**  
 come Meet 1SG. one moment possible PART. 1SG. Have  
**riəŋ Ø trəw niʔyiey**  
 story Ø must talk

“Could you come and see me for a while? I have one / several points to discuss”

In (6a) N + **klah** introduces some instances of the N as they fit a differential property which is not made explicit: the points to be discussed are identified for the speaker.

In (6b) N + **muəy-camnuən** refers to a sum of x (*quantificational reference*), out of all qualification. In (6c) N + Ø refers to one or several instances of the category N (leaving it to the context to make the difference).

In some cases, **klah** is impossible, and only Ø and **muəy-camnuən** can be used:

(7a) **siewp<sup>hiw</sup>** **muəy-** **nih** **trəw** **yɔək** **tɪw** **?aoy** **rooŋ-** **wɪŋ**  
**camnuən**  
 book **muəy-** DEICT. must take go give printing- PART.  
**camnuən** house

“This set of books must be taken back to the printing house !”

(7b) **siewp<sup>hiw</sup>** **Ø** **nih** **trəw** **yɔək** **tɪw** **?aoy** **rooŋ-** **wɪŋ**  
 book **Ø** DEICT. must take go give printing- PART.  
 house

“This / these book(s) books must be taken back to the printing house !”

(7c) \***siewp<sup>hiw</sup>** **klah** **nih** **trəw** **yɔək** **tɪw** **?aoy** **rooŋ-** **wɪŋ**  
 book **klah** DEICT. must take go give printing- PART.  
 house

In (7) the impossibility of **klah** means that the books in question are copies of one and the same book, which precludes any qualitative differentiation of those books.

Contrary to this case, examples can be met where **klah** only possible :

(8) Context: a police inspector (S<sub>1</sub>) tries to get the manager (S<sub>0</sub>) of a restaurant tell him if the wanted person comes to eat daily in the restaurant:

S<sub>1</sub>: **koat** **mɔək** **ɲam** **baay** **niŋ** **roal** **tɲay** **rii** **yaanmec**  
 3SG come eat rice DEICT. every day or how  
 « Does he come to eat here every day? »

S<sub>0</sub>: **min** **Tieŋ** **tee** **tɲay** **klah** **mɔək** **tɲay** **klah** **?at**  
 NEG. Regular PART. day **klah** come day **klah** NEG.

“It is not regular, some days he comes, and others he doesn’t”

In (8) **muəy-camnuən** and Ø cannot be used. Considering the whole set of the days, **klah**<sub>1</sub> and **klah**<sub>2</sub> work out two subsets of days, the first one fitting « come », and the second one « not come ».

(8bis) - At the market place, a customer (S<sub>1</sub>) and a seller (S<sub>0</sub>).

S<sub>1</sub>: **ʔaoy Sway kɲom muey kiiloo mɔək**  
 give Mango 1SG. one kilo come

“Give me one kilo of mangoes!”

S<sub>0</sub>: **yɔək Sway praap<sup>h</sup>ɛet naa**  
 take Mango sort **naa**

**pruəh Sway klah cuu swaay klah pʔaem haey swaay**  
 Because Mango **klah** acid mango **klah** sweet and mango

**klah Tiet cuu-  
ʔaem**

**klah** furthermore sweet-and-sour

“What kind of mangoes do you want? For there are acid mangoes, sweet mangoes and the rest, sweet-and-sour mangoes”.

In (8bis), the mangoes as a whole are divided into three subsets, each subset fitting a differential property: *acid*, *sweet* and *sweet-and-sour*.

(9) - To the question “in which group are there good students?”, S<sub>0</sub> answers:

(9a) **knɔŋ Krom nih mien sih Ø rien puukae krom**  
 in Group DEICT. have student Ø learn gifted group  
**pseeŋ Tiet ʔat mien tee**  
 other More NEG. have PART.

“In this group, there are good students, in others there aren’t any”

(9b) **knɔŋ Krom nih mien sih klah rien puukae krom**  
 in Group DEICT. have student **klah** learn gifted group  
**pseeŋ Tiet ʔat mien tee**  
 other More NEG. have PART.

“In this group, there are some good students, in others there aren’t any”

(9a) with Ø plainly states the existence of good students, whereas (9b) with **klah** states that there is a given number of students different from the others as they fit the property “be good” in their studies.

The series (10a-c) confirms that N Ø, contrary to N + **klah**, cannot refer to a partition on a whole set contextually introduced. Example (10c) is possible owing to the fact that a subset is built through an independent source of determination, making it possible to identify a group of NGOs.

(10a) **niw Srok kmae mien ʔaŋkaa craən mɛən tae ʔaŋkaa**  
 in Country khmer have organisation much be- only organisation  
 true

**klah** **kit** **tae** **pīi** **rɔək** **lɔy** **tee**  
**klah** Think only of look for money PART.

“It’s true that in Cambodia, there are many NGOs, but some (of them) are there only to make money”

(10b) \***niw** **srok** **kmae** **mien** **ʔaŋkaa** **craən** **mɛən** **tae** **ʔaŋkaa**  
 In Country khmer have organisation much be- only organisation  
 true  
 Ø **kit** **tae** **pīi** **rɔək** **lɔy** **tee**  
 Ø Think only of look for money PART.

(10c) **niw** **srok** **kmae** **mien** **ʔaŋkaa** **craən** **mɛən** **tae** **ʔaŋkaa**  
 In country Khmer have organisa- much be- only organisa-  
 tion true tion  
**ʔoostraa-** **kit** **tae** **pīi** **rɔək** **lɔy** **tee**  
**lii**  
**Australia** think only of look for money PART.

“It’s true that in Cambodia, there are many NGOs, but the Australian ones are there only to make money”

In all the above examples, **klah** marks a partition: a differential property is used to identify a group of instances of the N. But the  $N_{\text{count}} + \mathbf{klah}$  pattern does not necessarily refer to a partition:  $N + \mathbf{klah}$  can refer to a series of instances differentiated from each other. Whereas in the case of the "partition" interpretation, the property is used to distinguish a subset of instances of the N, in the second case what is emphasized is the fact that each one of the instances in the set has an identity. (6a) is a first example coming under this second interpretation: the different points to be mentioned by the speaker are not presented as a whole and in his view, each one of the points is important

(6a) **mɔək** **cuəp** **kɲom** **muəy** **pʰlɛət** **Baan** **tee** **kɲom** **mien**  
 come meet 1SG. one moment possible PART. 1SG. have  
**riəŋ** **klah** **trəw** **niʔyiey**  
 story **klah** must talk

“Could you come and see me for a short while? I have things to talk (to you)”

Other examples can be given:

(11a) **knoŋ** **krom** **nih** **kɲom** **dəŋ** **tʰaa** **mien** **neak** **klah**  
 In group DEICT. 1SG know that have people **klah**  
**min** **coolcət** **kɲom** **tee**  
 NEG. Like 1SG PART.

“In this group, I know that some people don't like me!”

- (11b) **knəŋ krom nih kɲom** dəŋ t<sup>h</sup>aa mien neak Ø  
 in group DEICT. 1SG know that have people Ø  
**mɪn coolcət kɲom tee**  
 NEG. Like 1SG PART.  
 “In this group, I know that there are people who don't like me!”

Example (11b) with N + Ø states the existence of one or several unfriendly people; in (11a) the speaker knows who is /are the one (s) in question but do not want to name him / them (let's point out the inclusive interpretation of **klah**: one or several people can be concerned).

- (12) **saalaa knəŋ kroŋ kroan mien sih rien puukae klah**  
 school In city enough have student learn be klah  
 gifted  
**baə saalaa taam p<sup>h</sup>uum weŋ ʔat mien sah tae**  
 if school follow village PART. NEG. avoir PART. only  
**mədaaŋ**  
 once  
 “In city schools, it is possible to find some good students, but in rural schools, there are none at all”

In (12) contrary to (9b), **klah** comes after the property « be good »: this property does not work here as the basis for differentiating a subset. In this position, **klah** just means that there are good students, each student fitting specifically the property « be good ». The same is to be found in the series of examples (13a – c) under the form of questions. The context is the following: an organism must make an assessment in schools in order to grant scholarships to the students. The assessor asks:

- (13a) **niw saalaa nih mien sih puukae Ø Tee**  
 at school DEICT. have student be- Ø PART.  
 gifted  
**baə saalaa taam p<sup>h</sup>uum weŋ ʔat mien sah**  
 if school follow village PART. NEG. avoir PART.  
**mədaaŋ**  
 once  
 “Are there good students in this school?”

- (13b) **niw saalaa nih mien sih puukae klah Tee**  
 at school DEICT. have student be- **klah** PART.  
 gifted  
**baə saalaa taam p<sup>h</sup>uum weŋ ʔat mien sah**  
 if school follow village PART. NEG. avoir PART.  
**mədaaŋ**  
 once  
 “Are there (even so) good students?”



(13c) niw saalaa nih mien sih klah puukae tee  
At school DEICT. have Student be-gifted **klah** PART.  
baə saalaa taam p<sup>h</sup>uum weŋ ʔat mien sah  
If school follow village PART. NEG. avoir PART.  
**mədaən**  
once  
“Are there some students who are good (students)?”

In (13a), the speaker has no prejudice: the question is whether there are (or not) good students. In (13b) with **klah**, the question is not about the existence (or not) of good students but is about the relevance of the property « be good » in order to qualify some of the students, which implies that for the speaker, it is not obvious that there are good students at all. As in (12), **klah** comes after the property ‘be good’. In (13c) we have a different order (N + **klah** + property): the speaker wants to know if there are students who are different from other students by “being good in school”.

**In short**, when the scope of **klah** is a **count noun**, it has two interpretations according to the context, corresponding to a ‘weighting’ either on the component **X**, or on the component ( $x_1$  ...  $x_k$  ...  $x_n$  ...): in one case it stands for the partition of a set based on a differential property; in the other, it introduces a series of instances of the category N taken in a qualitative variation.

## 2. Mass noun as the scope for klah

Combined with a mass noun **klah** has two interpretations:

(14) tik klah jam tiw c<sup>h</sup>ii puʒh  
water klah drink go suffer stomach

“Some brands of water cause stomach ache when you drink it”

In (14), **klah** can switch with **muəy-cəmnuən**. **klah** expresses a partition in the whole of the water brands. Owing to mass nouns properties, the series coming under the partition operated by **klah** is formed by the whole of the brands of bottled water.

(15) kom teŋ tae tik- teŋ sraa klah məək  
p<sup>h</sup>lae-  
c<sup>h</sup>əə  
NEG. buy only fruit- buy alcohol **klah** come  
juice

“Don’t buy only fruit juice, buy a certain amount of alcohol (leaving the quantity up to you)!”

In (15) **klah** can switch with **bantec** ‘a little’. **bantec** stands only for a small quantity, whereas **klah** refers to a given quantity, i.e. a quantity which is qualitatively defined: in the case of (15), this corresponds to the quantity the interlocutor will deem suitable as regards the number of people attending the party. This quantity is distinguished in the set of the possible quantities of alcohol.

As R. Jackendoff writes about mass nouns: “With a mass noun like water, one can divide its referent and still get something describable as water. For this second interpretation of **klah**, we put forward the hypothesis that **klah** marks a fragmentation of the mass noun, which means that in X ( $x_1 \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots$ )  $x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots$  each one of the x corresponds to a specific quantity (or portions) of alcohol. As for X, it refers to a set of *a priori* possible quantities

We now give one more example of **klah** marking a quantitative fragmentation of the mass noun (in (16) **bantec** is possible).

- |      |            |            |               |            |            |                 |                    |            |
|------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------|
| (16) | <b>baə</b> | <b>ʔat</b> | <b>məhoop</b> | <b>ɲam</b> | <b>yɔk</b> | <b>treyɲiet</b> | <b>klah</b>        | <b>tiw</b> |
|      | if         | NEG.       | side-dish     | eat        | take       | dried-          | <u><b>klah</b></u> | go         |
|      |            |            |               |            |            | fish            |                    |            |
|      | <b>ɲam</b> | <b>tiw</b> |               |            |            |                 |                    |            |
|      | eat        | go         |               |            |            |                 |                    |            |
- “If you have no side dishes, take some fair quantity of dried fish to eat.”

In (16) the quantity of dried fish is not just any quantity: take whatever you need, but leave some for me as well (sharing the quantity)

**In short**, with the mass nouns the two interpretations already identified for the count nouns are to be met again:

- a partition which, owing to the mass nouns properties, distinguishes a subset X ( $x_1 \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots$ ) of varieties of N; this subset is based on a differential property. The focus is on X, and the inner subset differences are not taken into account
- the fragmentation of the N in a series of distinct quantities X ( $x_1 \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots$ ); comparing (17a) with Ø / (17b) with **klah** shows that the fragmentation of the N results in given specific quantities: the focus is on the series ( $x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots$ ).

**3. klah as a pronoun**

We will speak of **klah** as a pronoun when its scope is not an N, whether it is contextually given (ex. (17)) or **klah** corresponds to the predicate internal object (ex. (18)) :

- (17) - context: S<sub>0</sub> gave some honey to S<sub>1</sub>, and one week later, S<sub>0</sub> asks S<sub>1</sub> :
- |                  |             |            |             |            |            |            |            |
|------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| S <sub>0</sub> : | <b>tik-</b> | <b>ɲom</b> | <b>ʔəoy</b> | <b>tiw</b> | <b>ʔəh</b> | <b>həy</b> | <b>niw</b> |
|                  | <b>kmom</b> |            |             |            |            |            |            |
|                  | honey       | 1SG        | give        | go         | finish     | already    | yet        |
- “The honey I gave you, did you finish it or is there some left?”



(20) - In a meeting, the same person (S<sub>1</sub>) keeps speaking all the time, which irritates S<sub>0</sub> who therefore stops him:

- (20a) **sɲat moat Ø tiw**  
 quiet mouth Ø Go  
 “Shut up !”
- (20b) **sɲat moat Ø tiw / tuk ?aoy kee ni?yiey p<sup>h</sup>aaŋ**  
 quiet mouth Ø go let give people speak PART.  
 “Shut up for a while, let the others speak!”
- (20c) **sɲat moat bantec tiw / tuk ?aoy kee ni?yiey p<sup>h</sup>aaŋ**  
 quiet mouth little go let give people speak PART.  
 “Just shut up **a little** [...] !”

In this series (20), **sɲat moat** means ‘shut up’. **moat** which can often be translated by ‘mouth’ is part of the predicate. In (20a), with the form **Ø**, the injunction takes a sharply categorical tone *I want you to shut up right now*. In (20b), **klah** stands for the construction of one or several instances of the process: *all I’m asking you is shut up a little / from time to time*. In (20c) with **bantec** the request is limited to one time for a limited period quantitatively defined. The principle here is quite similar to that working with the mass nouns: **klah** can be interpreted as referring to a series of occurrences of the V. In accordance with the notion of inclusive plurality, the actualization may concern one or several occurrences of the V, each occurrence being differentiated.

Here are two other examples:

- (21a) **baə caŋ baan sok- l?aa kom cih tae laan**  
 if want obtain health good NEG. take only car  
**p<sup>h</sup>iep**  
**daə klah tiw**  
 walk klah go  
 “If you want to get in good health, don't take the car, just walk a little (reasonably)”
- (21b) **baə caŋ baan sok- l?aa kom cih tae laan**  
 if want obtain health good NEG. take only car  
**p<sup>h</sup>iep**  
**daə bantec tiw**  
 walk little go  
 “If you want to get in good health, don't just take the car, walk a little / from time to time” (for example when you go at work)

In short, with **klah** as a pronoun, the two interpretations appearing with the count nouns and the mass nouns (partition and series of occurrences qualitatively differentiated) are available.

On the other hand, when **klah** has the process for its scope, the second interpretation is the only possible one (with a V there is no available set of Vs)

**3. klah and the reduplication**

As regards reduplication, we will study two different points:

- **klah in case of reduplication of the N;**
- **klah reduplicated.**

In Paillard (2009), we have shown that the reduplication of the N puts N in a qualitative variation out of any quantitative variation: each one of a series of instances ( $x_1 \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots$ ) of the category N specifically fits the predicate of which it is an argument (or the qualifying property): NN **p** means... $x_i - p_i \dots x_k - p_k \dots x_n - p_n \dots$ .

It appears that the reduplication on the one hand and **klah** on the other have a quite similar semantic value: both involve a series of qualitatively differentiated instances. We hereafter take a series where for a given N, we consider all the possibilities for its determinations: N- $\emptyset$ , NN, N-**klah**, NN-**klah**

**3.1. klah in case of reduplication of the N**

(22a) - A popular TV program presenter (S1) goes to the provinces in order to recruit girls for his program. On his arrival in a village, he asks a local inhabitant (S0):

S1:	<b>niw</b>	<b>p<sup>h</sup>uum</b>	<b>nih</b>	<b>mien</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>s?a</b>	<b>tee</b>		
	in	village	DEICT.	have	girl	beautiful	PART.		
	« In this village, are there beautiful girls? »								
S0:	<b>niw</b>	<b>p<sup>h</sup>uum</b>	<b>nih</b>	<b>mien</b>	<b>srey</b>	$\emptyset$	<b>s?a</b>	<b>srey</b>	$\emptyset$
	in	village	DEICT.	have	girl	$\emptyset$	beautiful	girl	$\emptyset$
	<b>?at</b>	<b>s?a</b>	<b>?at</b>	<b>dooc</b>	<b>p<sup>h</sup>uum</b>	<b>nuh</b>	<b>tee</b>	<b>srey-</b>	<b>s?a</b>
	NEG.	beautiful	NEG.	like	village	DEICT.	PART.	<b>srey</b> <sup>3</sup>	beauti.
								girl-	
								girl	
	<b>taen-</b>								
	<b>?ah</b>								
	all								
	“In this village, some are beautiful ones and some are not, unlike in the village over there where all the girls are beautiful (every girl is beautiful)”								

In (22a) the sequence

---

<sup>3</sup> In all examples of this 29’s series, reduplication of “girl” in second sequence of the sentence is required.

<b>srey</b>	∅	<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>srey</b>	∅	<b>ʔat</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>
girl	∅	beauti.	girl	∅	NEG.	beauti.

can be replaced by the following sequences:

(b)

<b>srey</b>	<b>srey</b>	∅	<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>srey</b>	∅	<b>ʔat</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>
girl	girl	∅	beauti.	girl	girl	∅	NEG.	beauti.

(c)

<b>srey</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>ʔat</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>
girl	<b>klah</b>	beauti.	girl	<b>klah</b>	NEG.	beauti.

(d)

<b>srey</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>ʔat</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>
girl	girl	<b>klah</b>	beauti.	girl	girl	<b>klah</b>	NEG.	beauti.l

(e)

<b>srey</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>ʔat</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>klah</b>
girl	beautif	<b>klah</b>	girl	NEG.	beautif	<b>klah</b>

(f)

<b>srey</b>		<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>srey</b>	<b>ʔat</b>	<b>sʔaat</b>	<b>klah</b>
girl	girl	beauti.	<b>klah</b>	girl	girl	NEG.	beauti.	<b>klah</b>

In (a) N ∅ property **p** ('beautiful') N ∅ property **p'** ('not beautiful') corresponds to the construction of two subsets of girls in relation with the property **p** : The two subsets do not exhaust the whole set, but nothing is said about their number (the "beautiful-girls" subset can count for one single unit).

In (b) N N **p** ('beautiful') N N **p'** ('not beautiful') according to our hypothesis on the reduplication of the N corresponds to the construction of two series of N in relation with **p** and **p'**, each occurrence (individual) of the two series specifically fitting **p** (or **p'**). Contrary to (a) the two series are not in a contrastive relation and those two series do not exhaust the whole set of the village girls (some of them are not taken into account as regards the property **p**).

In (c) N **klah**<sub>1</sub>-**p** ('beautiful') N **klah**<sub>2</sub>-**p'** ('not beautiful') **klah**<sub>1</sub> and **klah**<sub>2</sub> correspond to the construction of two subsets of N (in relation with the property **p** or **p'**), each instance of the two series are considered as individuals. As in (b) those two subsets don't exhaust the whole of the village girls.

In (d) N N **klah**<sub>1</sub>-**p** ('beautiful') N N **klah**<sub>2</sub>-**p'** ('not beautiful'), two series of differentiated N are at first introduced. In those series, **klah**<sub>1</sub> et **klah**<sub>2</sub> distinguish each one for its part a group of girls (previously differentiated), fitting or not the property **p**. The co-presence of the reduplication of the N and of **klah** reinforces the differentiation between the individuals in each series. As in (b) and (c) those two subsets don't exhaust the whole of the village girls.

In (c) and (d) **klah** is placed before **p** (and **p'**). In (e) and (f) **klah** is placed after **p** (and **p'**). As was noted before through the examples (12) and (13b), in the second case, the partition is not based on the property **p** (or **p'**).

In (e) N **p** ('beautiful') **klah**<sub>1</sub> N **p** ('not beautiful') **klah**<sub>2</sub>, **klah**<sub>1</sub> and **klah**<sub>2</sub> stand for the construction of two subsets (partition of the set N) – this partition is not based on the property **p** (or **p'**).

In (f), N N **p** ('beautiful') **klah**<sub>1</sub> N N neg **p** ('beautiful') **klah**<sub>2</sub> two series of differentiated N are at first introduced and in those series, **klah**<sub>1</sub> et **klah**<sub>2</sub> distinguish, each one for its part a group of girls previously differentiated as fitting respectively the properties **p** and **p'**. The distinction between those two groups is not based on the property **p** (or **p'**).

The combinations illustrated by (22d- f) show the modes of interaction between the qualitative plurality (reduplication) and the <quantitative and qualitative> plurality, where both quantitative and qualitative components of the plurality get actualized.

### 3.2. **klah** reduplicated

As a noun determiner and as an indefinite pronoun as well, **klah** can be reduplicated (but it must be noted that it's impossible to have at the same time reduplication of the N and reduplication of **klah**: \* NN **klah klah**). As regards the above examples (22 d, f) where the N **klah** has for its scope is reduplicated, we have put forward our hypothesis on the N reduplication: each instance of the category N specifically fits the predicate. An extension of this hypothesis to the reduplication of **klah** can be validated. In relation to the process, **klah**<sub>1</sub> and **klah**<sub>2</sub> construct, each for its part, a qualitatively distinct subset, entailing an effect of vagueness (no way to centre/focus on a given subset). 'Vagueness' is one possible interpretation of reduplicated N or Adjective; see:

(23) A client giving indications to the taxi driver:

<b>pæɪ</b>	<b>dəl</b>	<b>rəʊbɑŋ</b>	<b>k<sup>h</sup>iəw</b>	<b>k<sup>h</sup>iəw</b>	<b>nuh</b>	<b>səm</b>	<b>ç<sup>h</sup>əp</b>
when	arrive	fence	bleu	bleu	DEICT.	please	stop

“When you arrive at the bleu-like fence, please stop there”

(24) The manager (S1) of a show asks the producer (S<sub>0</sub>):

<b>rɪŋ</b>	<b>dæl</b>	<b>trəw</b>	<b>leɪp</b>	<b>cap-</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>həy</b>	<b>nɪw</b>
story	REL.	must	play	start	rehearse	already	yet

**p<sup>h</sup>daəm**

“About the play you are to perform, have you already started the rehearsals?”

(24a)

S <sub>0</sub> :	<b>cap-</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>həy</b>
	<b>p<sup>h</sup>daəm</b>			
	start	rehearse	<b>klah</b>	already

“We have started some sketches”

(24b)

S <sub>0</sub> :	<b>cap-</b>	<b>hat</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>klah</b>	<b>həy</b>
	<b>p<sup>h</sup>daəm</b>				
	start	rehearse	<b>klah</b>	<b>klah</b>	already

“We have started some sketches here and then (nothing serious)”

(25)

**cam riəŋ klah klah**  
remember story **klah klah**

“I faintly remember some of the things / some episodes now and then”

(26)

S<sub>1</sub>: **ʔah baay ɲam haəy niw**  
finish rice eat already rester  
“Is there some rice left?”

(26a)

S<sub>0</sub>: **səl klah dae ʔaac kroan samrap pii neak**  
to be **klah** PART. can enough for two person  
left  
“There is some rice left (a small amount), it can do for two people”

(26b)

S<sub>0</sub>: **səl klah klah dae ʔaac kroan samrap pii neak**  
to be **klah klah** PART. Can enough for two pers.  
left  
“There is just a very little left, it’s **just** enough for two people”

In (24b) and (25) the reduplication of **klah** gives rise to a feeling of vagueness: there is no construction of qualitatively distinct subset. It is therefore impossible to identify the rehearsed sketches (ex. 24b) or the actualized recollections (ex. (25)). In (26b) **klah**<sub>1</sub> and **klah**<sub>2</sub> construct two distinct quantities of rice left, which stops from assessing the exact quantity of rice left, therefore interpreted as (very) insufficient.

The working of *klah* when reduplicated is similar to that of *klah* not reduplicated with the construction of two differentiated series (qualitative partition). The criterion liable to make an occurrence belong to such or such series not being specified, this co-presence of two series results in a kind of interference, with a depreciating effect on the occurrences involved, owing to the fact that although differentiated, they are not taken as full individuals.

#### 4. **klah** combining with the interrogatives / indefinites **ʔey** and **naa**.

**ʔey** is a free choice type of indefinite and an interrogative. As an indefinite–interrogative **naa** means that the items previously made out are related to an undifferentiated set through the introduction of a new property:  $x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n \rightarrow (x_{(i)} \dots x_{(k)} \dots x_{(n)} \dots)_{\text{set}}$  (see Thach (2007)).

Whereas with **ʔey**, **klah** can only stand in postposition, with **naa**, **klah** can stand before **naa** (**naa** is an indefinite) or after **naa** (**naa** is an interrogative) (note that **muəy** ‘one’ shows the same distribution as **klah**. On this point, see Thach (2007)).

##### 4.1. **klah** before **naa**.

(27) **kee t<sup>h</sup>aa kən baaraŋ lʔaa məəl məən tee**



people say picture French good look be-true PART.  
 “It is said that French films are good, is that true?”

(27a) **min teanʔah tee k<sup>h</sup>ah min lʔaa dae niŋ**  
 NEG. all PART. **klah** NEG. good also DEICT.

“Not all of them, some (a fixed but not determined quantity) are bad (I can make a list)”

(27b) **min teanʔah tee klah naa min lʔaa dae niŋ**  
 NEG. all PART. **klah naa** NEG. good also DEICT.

“Not all of them, some are bad, but I can't tell which ones”.

Note that **naa** alone is not possible in this example.

In (27a) **klah** marks a partition on the set of the French films and constructs the subset of films fitting the property « be bad ». It refers to instances of films which can be identified, but that the speaker cannot list.

In (27b) the presence of **naa** after **klah** means that the films of the subset of distinctive instances constructed by **klah** reduces to an undifferentiated subset: the speaker is unable to identify them; **naa** makes uncertain the previous distinction in the instances of bad films:

Another example:

(28a) **niw knoŋ p<sup>h</sup>uum nih klah ʔat tean ʔaŋkaa hoop p<sup>h</sup>aaŋ**  
 be in village DEICT. **klah** NEG. PART. rice eat PART.

“In this village, some inhabitants ( I can identify them), don't even have rice to eat”

(28b) **niw knoŋ p<sup>h</sup>uum nih klah naa ʔat tean**  
 be in village DEICT **klah naa** NEG. PART.

**ʔaŋkaa hoop p<sup>h</sup>aaŋ**  
 rice eat PART.

“In this village, some inhabitants (I can't or don't want to identify them), don't even have rice to eat.”

In (28) as well **naa** neutralizes the differentiation between the occurrences of the N operated by **klah**: **naa** concerns only the qualitative side of **klah**, suspending the prior differentiation. The **klah naa** combination can be represented as follows :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbf{X} & (\mathbf{x}_i \dots \mathbf{x}_k \dots \mathbf{x}_n \dots) & \rightarrow & \mathbf{X} & (\mathbf{x}_{(i)} \dots \mathbf{x}_{(k)} \dots \mathbf{x}_{(n)} \dots) \\ & \mathbf{klah} & & & \mathbf{naa} \end{array}$$

#### 4.2 **klah** after **naa** and ʔey

(29a) **lənɟec niŋ caŋ ɟam məhoop ʔey**

- evening DEICT. want eat side-dish **?ey**  
 “Which dishes do you want to eat tonight?” (What do you eat for dinner?)  
 (29b) **ləŋieç niŋ caŋ ɲam məhoop ?ey klah**  
 evening DEICT. want eat side-dish **?ey klah**  
 “Which dishes do you want to eat tonight (there must be some you like best)?”  
 (29c) **ləŋieç niŋ caŋ ɲam məhoop naa**  
 evening DEICT. want eat side-dish **naa**  
 “Which dishes (out of this list) you want to eat tonight?”  
 (29d) **ləŋieç niŋ caŋ ɲam məhoop naa klah**  
 evening DEICT. want eat side-dish **naa klah**  
 “Among all the dishes on this list, what are those you want to eat tonight?”

(29a-d) are questions (note that in this case **?ey** and **naa** alone are possible). Question (29a), with **?ey** alone, is an open question: **?ey** points the whole of the possible and conceivable dishes. In (29b) **klah** following **?ey** means that for  $S_0$  all the dishes of the set are not on the same level for  $S_1$  and that the question aims at identifying a subset of dishes fitting the property ‘be preferred by  $S_1$ ’. The difference between (29c) with **naa** and (29a) with **?ey** is due to the fact that at first with **naa** the set is not that of all the possible and conceivable dishes, but a set of dishes on a menu. The question means that  $S_0$  doesn’t know which dishes on the list  $S_1$  does prefer. We shift from a set of identified dishes to a set of unidentified dishes. In (29d) as well as in (29b),  $S_0$  asks  $S_1$  to identify a subset of dishes as those  $S_1$  wants to eat on the evening.

Another example:

(30) -  $S_0$  who didn't attend the meeting asks  $S_1$ :

- (30a) **pracom prik miŋ kee ni?yiey pii riəŋ ?ey**  
 meeting morning DEICT. people speak about story **?ey**  
 “Which were the topics broached in this morning meeting?”  
 (30b) **pracom prik miŋ kee ni?yiey pii riəŋ ?ey klah**  
 meeting morning DEICT. people speak about story **?ey klah**  
 “What were the topics broached in this morning meeting? (I know nothing of the topics liable to be discussed, but since a meeting took place, I take it for granted that some subject(s) were broached)”  
 (30c) **pracom prik miŋ kee ni?yiey pii riəŋ naa**  
 meeting morning DEICT. people speak about story **naa**  
 “What were the topics on the agenda discussed this morning?”  
 (30d) **pracom prik miŋ kee ni?yiey pii riəŋ naa klah**  
 meeting morning DEICT. people speak about story **naa klah**  
 “Among the topics on the agenda, which ones were actually discussed this morning?”

Placed after **?ey** and **naa**, **klah** introduces a qualitative partition on the set established by **?ey** and **naa**. This qualitative partition leads to an heterogeneity of the set, which is virtual. Since it comes through a question, **?ey** and **naa** as question markers are in the locutor's area and **klah** in the interlocutor's. The combination between **klah** with **?ey** and **naa** can be summed up as follows:

**?ey:** (29a)

$$\begin{matrix} (x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots)_{\text{set}} \\ S_0 \quad (S_1 ?) \end{matrix}$$

**?ey klah:** (29b)

$$\begin{matrix} (x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots)_{\text{set}} & \rightarrow & X & (x_i \dots x_n \dots)_{\text{subset}} \\ \text{?ey} & (S_0) & & \text{klah} (S_1 ?) \end{matrix}$$

**naa:** (29c)

$$\begin{matrix} x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n & \rightarrow & (x_{(i)} \dots x_{(k)} \dots x_{(n)} \dots)_{\text{set}} \\ \text{list} & & S_0 \quad (S_1 ?) \end{matrix}$$

**naa klah:** (29d)

$$\begin{matrix} x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n & \rightarrow & (x_{(i)} \dots x_{(k)} \dots x_{(n)} \dots)_{\text{set}} & \rightarrow & X & (x_i \dots x_n \dots)_{\text{subset}} \\ \text{list} & & \text{naa} (S_0) & & & \text{klah} (S_1 ?) \end{matrix}$$

## Conclusion

We claim that /**klah**/ associates both a quantitative and a qualitative information, as shown by the following representation:

$$X (x_i \dots x_k \dots x_n \dots)$$

This characterization is at work in all its various uses and values. If /**klah**/ can be considered as the main marker for plurality in Khmer, it must be pointed out that the qualitative component is nonetheless crucial, as regards the notion of partition as well as the construction of differentiated instances of the N

## Bibliography

- Corbett, G. (2000) *Number*, Cambridge University press, Cambridge  
 Gorgonev, Ju. (1966) *Grammatika khmerskogo jazyka*, Moskva  
 Farkas, D. & De Swart, H. (2009) « The semantics and pragmatics of plurals », ms., Santa Cruz/Utrecht  
 Haspelmath M. (1996) *Indefinite pronouns*, Oxford University Press  
 Huffman F. (1970) *Modern spoken Cambodian*, New Haven and London :Yale University Press  
 Jackendoff, R. (1991) “Parts and boundaries”, *Cognition*, 41, 9 – 45  
 Jarrega, M. (2000) *Le rôle du pluriel dans la construction du sens des syntagmes nominaux en français contemporain*, Thèse de doctorat, Université Paris X – Nanterre.

- Khin Sok (2001) *Grammaire du khmer*, Paris : Editions You Feng.
- Lasersohn, P. (1995) *Plurality, conjunctions and events*, Kluwer, Dordrecht
- Paillard, D. (2006) « Quelque N / quelques N », in : Corblin, Ferrando, Kupfermann (éds) *Indéfinis et prédication*, PU de la Sorbonne, 417 – 428.
- Paillard, D. (2009) « Réduplication du nom et de l'adjectif en khmer », in : S. Osu, G. Col, N. Garric & F. Toupin (éds) *Construction d'identité et processus d'identification*, Peter Lang, Bern, 569 – 586.
- Thach, J. D. (2007) *L'indéfinition en khmer : du groupe nominal au discours*, Thèse de doctorat, INALCO.
- Thach, J. D. (2009) « **naa** et **ɲey** : Indéfini – interrogatif en khmer. Deux différentes formes d'indéfinition », *Faits de Langues, Les Cahiers*, n° 1, 2009, Paris, 119-159.
- Vogeleer, S. & Tasmowski, L. (2006) *Non definitness and plurality*, Linguistics Today 95, John Benjamins Publishing Company.