

Chapter VI

Summary, Discussion and Suggestions

6.1 Summary

In the preceding chapters a point by point comparison of the phonological systems of Kui, Bruu and So was presented, with tentative conclusions concerning genetic relationships among the three languages being made at the end of appropriate sections,

First, the overall features of their phonological systems were compared in order to subsequently determine which features were shared by all three languages, which features were shared by two languages, which features were shared by only one language (i.e. non-shared).

The results of comparison at this level reveal that the three languages share register systems, syllable and word structures, an inventory of consonants, an inventory of initial consonant clusters, an inventory of vowels, distribution of initial consonants and consonant clusters with registers and distribution of vowels with registers and final consonants.

The results further reveal that Bruu and So have more additional features in common (6) than do Kui and So (3), or Kui and Bruu (0). Those features shared by Bruu and So but absent in Kui include contrastive nasalization, 2 additional diphthongs, 1 additional initial consonant cluster, 3 additional final consonant clusters, plus additional vowels and consonants that can occur in presyllables. Those features shared by Kui and So but not found in Bruu include 1 addi-

tional initial consonant, 3 additional initial consonant clusters, and 2 additional final consonants.

The conclusion reached based on comparison at this level was that Bruu and So are genetically closer to each other than either is to Kui.

Second, comparison was made of cognates in order to discover the sound correspondences shared by the languages for consonants and vowels in presyllables, initial consonants and initial consonant clusters, final consonants and final consonant clusters, and finally vowels and registers.

For presyllables the three languages shared 12 correspondences. The results of comparison further show that Bruu and So share more additional sound correspondences (6) than do Kui and Bruu (3), or Kui and So (2).

The conclusion reached by the comparison of shared sound correspondences in presyllables was again that Bruu and So are more closely related to each other than either is to Kui.

For initial consonants and initial consonant clusters, the three languages share almost all sound correspondences. However, Bruu and So share more additional correspondences (3) than do Kui and Bruu (0), or Kui and So (0). The 3 additional shared sound correspondences show that Bruu and So have in common the same phonological developments.

The conclusion reached by the comparison of shared sound correspondences for initial consonants and consonant clusters once again state that Bruu and So are genetically more closely related to each other is to Kui.

For final consonants and final consonant clusters the results of comparison reveal that the three languages again agree on a majority

of the sound correspondences. If we consider only the sound correspondences for the final velar stop, the final palatal stop and nasal, and the final palatal fricative, Kui and So share slightly more additional correspondences (2) than do Kui and Bruu (1), or Bruu and So (1). Thus, the differences regarding only these finals does not lend adequate support to any conclusion.

However, a consideration of 5 other (what might be judged minor) discrepancies would give Bruu and So 5 additional shared correspondences, thus shifting the conclusion to a closer relationship for Bruu and So than for Bruu or So to Kui.

For vowels and registers, the total number of sound correspondences is rather too large to attempt any counts of shared correspondences. Nevertheless, evidence overwhelmingly supports the conclusion again that Bruu and So are more closely related genetically than either is to Kui, because they share a majority of vowel and register correspondences whereas Kui has undergone so many independent developments in vowels - short, long, diphthongs - and vowel register.

To recapitulate, the conclusions arrived at from comparing shared phonological features and from comparing shared sound correspondences for presyllables, initial consonants and consonant clusters, final consonants and consonant clusters, and vowels and registers all agree that Bruu and So are definitely more closely related genetically than either of them is to Kui.

6.2 Discussion

Having compared the phonological systems of Kui, Bruu and So and the sound correspondences among them, I have used the resulting evidence to draw the above conclusions. I believe that the evidence

is convincing and that the conclusion is a valid one. Thus a logical next step would be to place Kui in one sub-group of Katuic and Bruu and So together in another, and give them names.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, as the case may be, this has already been done by several scholars, mainly using lexical evidence or lexicostatistical evidence. Most recently, Smith (1981) completed a very extensive lexicostatistical study of Mon-Khmer languages. He gives a brief review of the history of the use of lexicostatistical studies of Mon-Khmer languages and presents proposed sub-groups for a total of 45 languages.

For Katuic, he proposes a North Katuic sub-branch which includes Bruu, So, Kattang, Makong, Sli and Sui* and says that the closest other language to the North Katuic languages is Kuy (Kui), which along with Kuay and Nyeu (see 2.1.3) would form a West Katuic sub-branch. Smith also proposes a Central Katuic sub-branch in addition to Pacoh and Katu.

One of the purposes of this thesis is to compare the conclusions of my study to those of other linguists based on lexicostatistics. Moreover, Smith (1981:203) notes:

The lexicostatistic classification of languages is perforce tentative, but helpful for lack of a more definite means to relate languages. More phonological work is urged to refine these language relationships more definitely. (my emphasis)

* The Bru and So dialects used in Smith's study are different dialects from those used in this thesis. For the probable identification of the Sli and Sui languages used in Smith's study see 2.3.3. "So Tiali" and "So Slouy".

Therefore, in response to Smith's request, I offer my conclusions based on phonological evidence in support of his conclusions based on lexicostatistical evidence that Bruu and So should be classified together in one group while Kui should be placed in another group.* However, since my study concerned only these three languages, I can offer no conclusion regarding the classification of the other North Katuic languages by Smith nor regarding the possible classification of Kuay (Phailin 1980) and Nyeu (Taveeporn 1980) with Kui in a West Katuic sub-branch.

On this point we should look at another classification scheme for the Katuic languages currently used by other scholars. In a historical study of Katuic languages concentrating on vowel and register developments, Diffloth (1982) uses East-West divisions for the Katuic languages. In this study East Katuic includes Pacoh, Katu and Ngeq while West Katuic includes a So-Bru sub-group on one hand and a Souei-Kuy sub-group on the other. Another designation equated with West Katuic is So-Souei (Diffloth 1982:48, fn.1), used by Ferlus (1971, 1974a, 1974b) in his studies of Souei, among others.

Thus, even with this scheme my conclusions would lend support to the inclusion of So and Bruu in one sub-group and the inclusion of Kui in another sub-group. The point of difference is that Smith's classification does not include Kui and So-Bru in the same larger division.

5.3 Suggestions

First, in reference to the inclusion of Souei and Kui in the

*Ekawit Chinowat (1983) also offers support to Smith's classification in the form of comparative morphological evidence.

same sub-group of West Katuic or, in Smith's scheme, the possible inclusion of Souei in a West Katuic sub-branch along with Kui, Kuay and Nyeu, is a matter that must await more comparative phonology studies. Moreover, comparative studies of the various Kui dialects in the Surin-Si Sa Ket area will help decide the question of a solid West Katuic sub-branch. Many Kui dialects have not undergone the diphthong and vowel shifts found in Kui Ban Tael; some are conservative in other ways - at least one I know of has preserved final *-jh.

There are several questions concerning the relationship of Souei and Kui. According to Ferlus the Souei were cut off from the Kouï (Kui) of northern Cambodia by the descent of the Lao down the Mekong River Valley. If this is true, then Souei probably shared some sound changes, notably the *-c > -j?, *-ɲ > -n shifts, with its Bruu neighbors, so that in some matters it seems to be a Bruu dialect.

In fact, I would suggest that the above palatal shift, which is widespread in the Bruu-speaking area, could be used as a criterion for subdividing the North Katuic sub-branch, as this is a development not shared by So. Other non-shared developments in Bruu could be used for the same purpose.

Furthermore, studies of So dialects in the Sakon Nakhon-Nakhon Phanom area are greatly needed; findings could be used to determine the relationships of Trii and Truuḡ to So, on the one hand, and to Bruu, on the other.

Finally, even though this has been a phonological study, I have become aware of what Thomas (1980) calls "distinctive vocabulary" and the possibilities it holds for determining language relationships. Thus, I would suggest a list of selected items be used for this pur-

pose among and within the sub-branches of Katuic, e.g. 'water' (with which one could draw clear isoglosses based on the various shapes of the word), 'fish', 'cooked rice', milled rice', 'salt', mosquito', 'lazy' and even 'comb' and 'needle', which some Katuic languages have borrowed from Chamic languages.