

Chapter VI

Conclusions

Summary

Accepting Chamberlain's (1972) conclusions for the classification of Tai languages based on the development of proto voiced stops as either aspirated stops, PH, or unaspirated stops, P, in the modern languages, this work seeks criteria for the sub-classification of SWT PG languages and to suggest a sub-classification of these languages based on those criterion. The PG languages to be considered are Tai Mao, Tai Nüa, Tai Khamti, Tai Lü, Tai Yai, Tai Yuan, Tai Khün, White Tai, Black Tai and Red Tai.

In order to determine the criterion for the subclassification of SWT PG languages a comparative word list of PT cognates was compiled from various PG languages sources. The sources of data for this word list included: Tai Mao (author's field notes), Tai Khamti (Harris 1976, Weidert 1977), Tai Lü (Yu Tsui Nung 1979, Williams 1986), Tai Nüa (Yu Tsui Nung 1979, Gedney 1976), Tai Yai (Poo-Israkij 1985), Tai Yuan (Rungruengsri 1991, Bunphan 1980), Tai Khün (Petsuk 1978), Black Tai (Fippinger 1989, Gedney 1964), White Tai (Donaldson 1961,1963, Gedney 1964), and Red Tai (Gedney 1964).

In creating the comparative word lists, words which have similar or related meanings in the modern languages and which show regular sound correspondences are considered Tai cognates and were used for comparison of PG languages. Part of the process of comparing cognate words from various lexicons required a regularization of the conventions used by the various authors in presenting their data. For the most part this involved minor changes in the use of phoneme symbols used. The exception to this was the representation of tone. The comparative purposes of this thesis required that the phonemic systems used for representing tones in the source documents be changed to a tone system based on PT tone boxes: A1, A2, A3, A4, B1 ... DS4.

In the analysis of the word list there were a number of sound correspondences which were consistent for all PG languages. That is all PG languages used the same phoneme in a given set of cognate words. These sets of cognate words were of little interest to us as sameness is not a criterion which can be used for subdivision. However, there were other sets of sound correspondences in cognate words where different phonemes were consistently used. Some of these sound correspondences were considered to reflect a definitive relationship between the languages. Based on the Law of the Regularity of Sound Change, a difference between the phonemes used in cognate word sets indicates a phonological distinction which has either been lost in one language or which has never developed in the other. Other sound correspondences seem to more probably be the result of contact relations or sporadic changes of the languages. In the end, magnitude of evidence was a criterion in determining the existence of a definitive relationship. Languages which

share several sound changes were considered to contain strong evidence for positing a separate subdivision of PG languages.

Tai Nüa, Tai Mao and Tai Khamti show this type of evidence for sharing a common parent language. There are five sound correspondences which are unique to these three languages: 1) The SWT initial clusters *kw, *khw, *xw which appear consistently throughout SWT languages as /khw-/ and /kw-/ have become simple velar stops in NK. Such words as 'right-side' /khwa:/ and 'wide' /kwa:ŋ/ are /kha:/ and /ka:ŋ/ in NK. 2) NK have a tripartite split of the A tone: A1-23-4. No other PG language in this study has a tripartite split in the A tone. 3) In addition to the unique A1-23-4 tone split for NK there was a subsequent or perhaps simultaneous coalescence of the A2 and A3 tone boxes with the B4 tone box. In all three of these languages words from the tone boxes A2, A3 and B4 have the same tone. No other PG language has been reported to coalesce the A and B tone categories. 4) *ε and *ɔ have become /e/ and /o/ respectively in OPEN syllables while other PG languages these cognates have the vowel /ε/ or /ɔ/. Examples include 'old'; kε versus ke, and 'father'; pɔ versus po. 5) *ʔb initials are realized consistently and only with /m/. Examples include 'to fly' /min/ and 'leaf' /mau/. Exception to this sound correspondence occur in several sources. Cushing (1881) and Egerod (1957) report *ʔb > /m ~ w/ although it is possible that this variation is the result the mixing of data from various Tai dialects or languages. Because Gedney (1976) and one dialect of Harris (1975) report *ʔb > /w/ instead of *ʔb > /m / for Tai Nüa, it is proposed that the *ʔb > /m/ for Proto-NK occurred later than the other four sound correspondences and that at that time Gedney's and Harris's dialects of Tai Nüa, which are located at the eastern edge of the NK region, were separated from the main body of Tai-NK dialects. Table 82 lists these

correspondences which support the proposition that NK form a separate division of PG languages.

Table 82 NK Correspondences

	Mao	Nūa	Khamti	Khūn	Yuan	Yai	Lū	White	Black	Red
A	1-23-4	1-23-4	1-23-4	12-34	12-34	123-4	123-4	123-4	123-4	123-4
A,B	A23=B4	A23=B4	A23=B4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
*k ^w	k	k	k	k ^w	k ^w	k ^w	k ^w	k ^w	k ^w	k ^w
*kh ^w	kh	x	kh	kh ^w	kh ^w	kh ^w	x ^w	kh ^w	kh ^w	kh ^w
*ʔb	m	m	m	b~w	b	b	b	b	b~v	b~v
*ɛ	e	e	e	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ	ɛ
*ɔ	o	o	o	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ

Scholars working in comparative Tai linguistics have interpreted differences in tone split patterns as indicating differences in the genetic relationships among Tai languages. PG languages present three different types of tone splits for the A tone. Based on the correspondence of the PT A tone splits, it is possible to divide the PG languages into three types: 1) A1-23-4 as in NK, 2) A12-34 as in Tai Khūn and Tai Yuan, 3) A123-4 as in Tai Lū, Tai Yai, White Tai, Black Tai, and Red Tai. The language groupings based on these tone splits can also be seen in Table 82.

The PG languages contain several other sound correspondences among cognate word sets but these sound correspondences, unlike those reported for NK, do not consistently co-occur within any group of languages and therefore are considered to be the result of contact relationships or chance development in the languages rather than to a shared parent language.

Table 84 summarizes the distribution of the sound correspondences which are being attributed to language contact or chance. These correspondences are listed in Table 83:

Table 83 Non-Definitive Sound Correspondences

1. Coalescence of B4 and C123 tone boxes
2. Coalescence of DL4 and DS4 tone boxes
3. Coalescence of DL123 and DS123 tone boxes
4. *kl > c, *khl > ch, etc.
5. Nasal umlaut
6. No phonemic contrast between /ph/ and /f/
7. Phonemic contrast between /kh/ and /x/
8. Monophthongization; *ia > e, *ua > ə, *ua > o
9. *aw > au versus *aw > ay or ə:

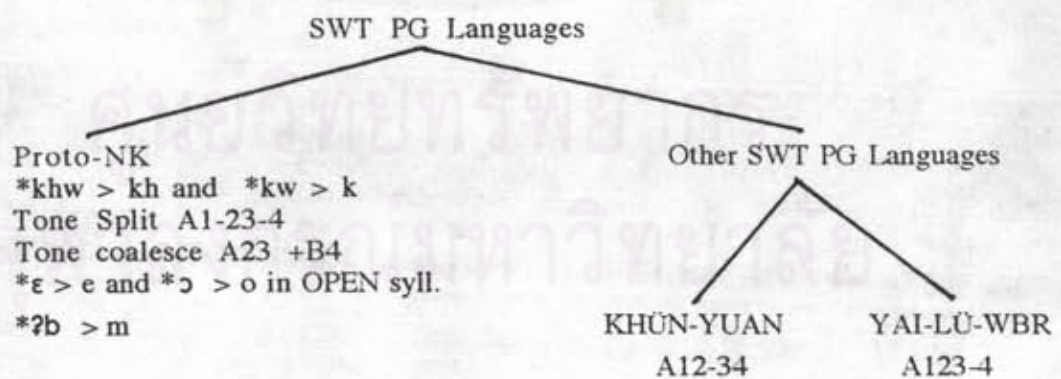
The attributing of these sound correspondences to non-genetic factors is largely due to the fact that these correspondences overlap in such a way as to present mutually exclusive scenarios for a genetic subdivision. For example, from the perspective of White Tai, White Tai's common ancestor language with Black and Red Tai underwent a sound change of *kl > c but Tai Lü did not undergo this change. Conversely White Tai's common ancestor language with Tai Lü underwent a nasal umlaut sound change but Black and Red Tai did not. Language contact may have had a role in creating these overlapping sound correspondences. The fact that language contact has occurred between these languages is further evidenced by examples of borrowed terms in the languages lexicons as well as by their geographic locations and historical references.

Table 84 Other PG Correspondences

	Mao	Nūa	Khamti	Khūn	Yuan	Yai	Lū	White	Black	Red
B, C	-	-	-	-	-	B4=C123	-	-	-	B4=C123
D4†	-	(D4)	D4	-	-	-	D4	D4	D4	-
D123††	-	-	D123	-	-	-	-	D123	D123	D123
*kl, etc	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	c	c	c
N. umlaut	-	-	-	-	-	-	umlaut	umlaut	-	-
x = kh	-	-	-	-	-	-	(x = kh)	x = kh	-	-
ph = f	ph = f	-	ph = f	ph = f	-	ph = f	-	-	ph = f	ph = f
*ua etc	fusion	fusion	fusion	fusion	-	fusion	fusion	fusion	-	-
*aw	aw	aw	aw	ay	ay	aw	ay	aw	aw	ə

Figure 13 diagrams our conclusion that Tai Nūa, Tai Mao and Tai Khamti form a separate branch from the other SWT PG languages and the these remaining languages can be subdivided based on tone splits in the A tone.

Figure 13 Division of SWT PG Languages



† That is DL4 = DS4

†† That is DL123 = DS123

Discussion

The principal difference between the classification of SWT PG languages contained in Figure 13 and other classifications of SWT languages is the grouping of NK. Chamberlain (1975) has grouped Shan, Lü, Yuan and Tai Khamti as one branch in the division of SWT languages where the opposing branch contains White, Black and Red Tai. Hartmann (1980) makes a division between YUAN-KHÜN and SHAN-LÜ-WHITE-BLACK-RED based on tone splits in the A tone but his analysis does not include NK dialects. Brown (1965) did not include most of the SWT PG languages in his classification and therefore it is not clear how they would fit into his scheme of classification. Li's (1960) subdivision similarly has not included most of the PG languages in his classification although his classification does separate Shan from the grouping of Tai Lü and White Tai and Black Tai (Tai Noir) from the other PG languages.

This research has been in large part been made possible by the work of other linguists who have done field work on the various SWT PG languages. Even so there continues to be a need for synchronic description of Tai dialects, descriptions which preferably would be carried out on site. This is particularly true for the Tai dialects in Myanmar.

One convention which needs to be addressed in future synchronic descriptions is the tendency for researchers to name their dialect after the village or location within which it is spoken. It is well known that Tai speakers tend to label themselves as a people and their form of speech based on their location or some feature thereof. Unfortunately often there is more than one Tai dialect being spoken in a given location. And of course this is even more likely to be true of larger towns.

In my own research with displaced Tai Mao speakers I have seen this. Several men whom I have had the opportunity to interview were born and/or raised in Nam Kham, (north) Shan States, Myanmar. Two of these men can serve as examples. The first was born in Nam Kham but from an early age was sent away to school and lived with "Shan" speakers in the central/south area of the Shan States as well as in Rangoon. When asked he insists that he can speak Tai Mao but his Tai Mao friends describe his speech as containing numerous "Shan" forms of speech and Burmese vocabulary items. The second example is a man whose parents are from the former ruling class of the central region of the Shan States. This man has spent nearly all of his life in Nam Kham but has always been associated with the "urban", as opposed to agricultural, community. When in the company of other Tai Mao speakers he will describe himself as Tai Mao but when you get down to the nitty gritty of which language he speaks he will admit that his Tai is different from the speech of his Tai Mao friends. It seems that in Nam Kham there are at least two Tai dialects being spoken. The dialect from the more southern regions of the Shan States spoken by "urban" immigrants and the dialect of the local population.

Knowing the details which I have given for these two men it is obvious that they would not be good choices as language informants. But it is not always easy to obtain this type of information. In my case it was only after knowing these men for many months that I began to learn their personal histories. If I had met one of these two speakers I described above and immediately used him as an informant on the "Tai Nam Kham" dialect, which is how both of these men would initially describe their own speech, I would be presenting a distorted picture of the dialect of that region.

Beyond the need for accurate descriptions of Tai languages from less accessible Tai speaking areas, there is also a need for dialect analysis of the differences in forms of speech. We have already discussed briefly the lack of clarity in the application of the terms dialect and language to refer to Tai forms of speech. When in a "global" Shan frame of mind my informants claim they can easily understand any Tai speech from within Myanmar and even claim that Northern Thai is easy to understand. But those same informants when their interest is turned to the heritage of the Tai Mao kingdom, claim that some of their Tai Mao friends cannot really speak Tai Mao. The truth is probably somewhere in between these two extremes but only through synchronic descriptions of monolingual speakers and intelligibility testing can we be sure.

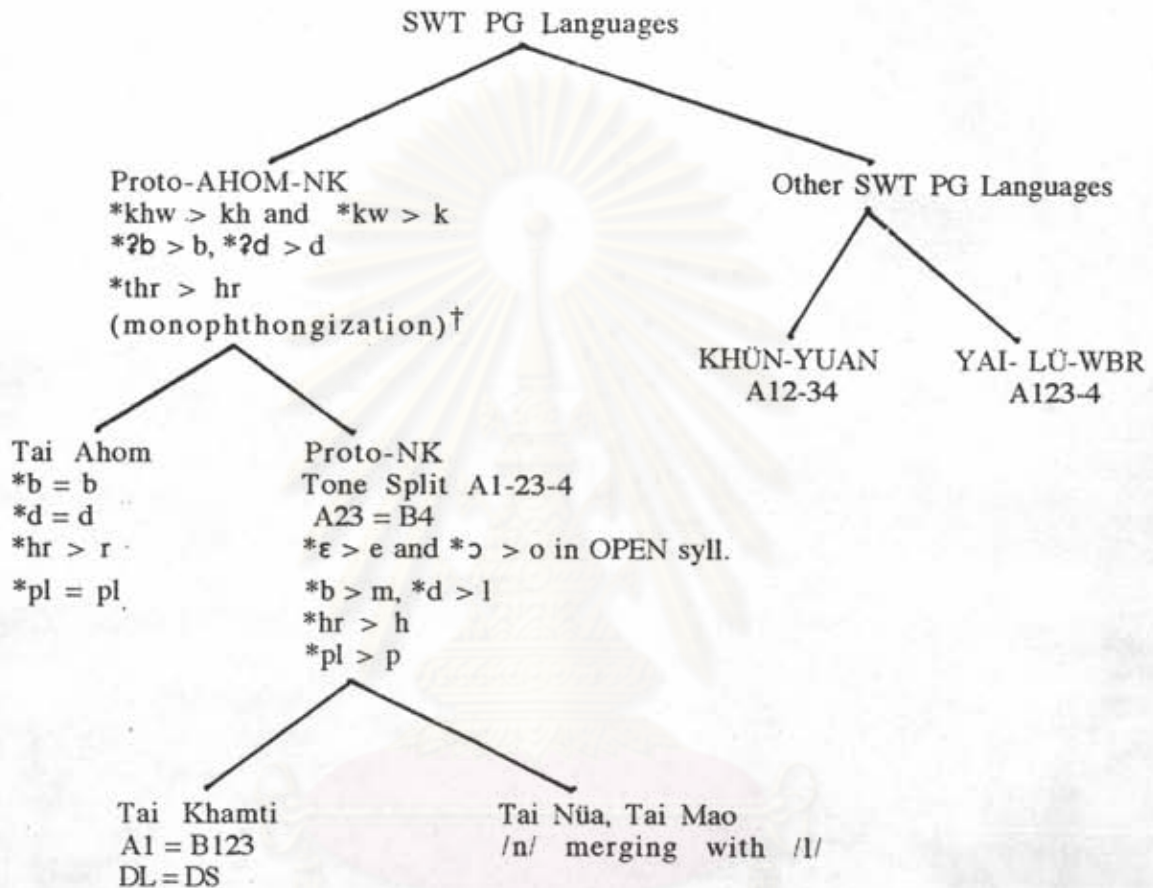
One criticism of this work may be that I have maintained a distinction between Tai Nüa and Tai Mao where others such as Harris (1975) claim that Tai Mao is a dialect of Tai Nüa. Generally I would agree that Tai Mao is a dialect of Tai Nüa. Certainly there are phonological evidences for claiming this as well as sociological factors such as the use of the same script and shared proverbs. In the end I preferred to keep my informants' speech separate from the data of other researchers until I have had the opportunity to do further, preferably on site, analysis of the Tai Nüa dialects.

Concerning the criteria which I have used to define Proto-NK, a few comments can be made. L-Thongkum (personal communication) claims that there are other SWT PG languages, including the Tai Luang of Lashio, Myanmar and a dialect spoken in Maguan County, Yunnan, which have an A1-23-4 tone split but that these languages do not have an A23-B4 tone box coalescence. These languages have a coalescence of the B4 = C123

tone boxes. If with further investigation these prove to be representative of certain SWT PG dialects it may be that the A1-23-4 criteria for Proto-NK is redundant and that the true defining criteria is the A23-B4 coalescence. (Solnit(1994), including data from one of my informants, has proposed this as an isogloss for Tai languages spoken in the Tai Nua and Tai Mao areas.) Perhaps the A1-23-4 tone split will prove to be a criteria for posting a node above Proto-NK which joins the Proto-NK with the dialects to which L-Thongkum has referred.

I have also mentioned the possibility of node above Proto-NK for Tai Ahom. Tai Ahom, a PG language, shares the merging of labialized velar stop initials with velar stop initials which we saw for NK. Prof. Prasert na Nagara (1994) has claimed that Chinese sources indicate that the Tai Ahom migrated from *Muang Mao*. One of my language informants also makes this claim saying he has met ethnic Tai Ahom who desire to return to do research in *Muang Mao* because their histories tell them that *Muang Mao* is where they came from. None of these source documents are available to me but assuming their claims are true, this would provide additional support for an AHOM-NK grouping. The addition of an AHOM-NK node is made in Figure 14 with various criteria which are used to support this sub-division.

Figure 14 Division of PG Languages: Proto-AHOM-NK



If we consider the distribution of languages in Figure 14 we can see that this also agrees with the history of the migration of SWT people as proposed by Chamberlain (1975) where the SWT subdivided from an area in northwestern Vietnam the PH languages proceeding south and west and the P languages proceeding west. In Figure 14 we see portrayed two subgroups of the P languages, geographically west and east. The AHOM-

[†] Tai Ahom has monophthongization of the PT diphthongs *ia, *ua and *ua such as: 'wife' /mi/, 'tongue' /li/, 'sound' /ching/, 'frog' /khit/, 'house' /ren/, 'yellow' /leng/, 'blood' /let/, 'head' /rū/ or /ru/, 'beard' /nut/, and 'deaf' /nuk/.

NK group separated from the other PG languages first as indicated by its west-most location and supported by its sound correspondences. Further investigation of the vocabularies, literature and customs of the Ahom and NK languages may provide further evidence to support a Proto-AHOM-NK grouping.



ศูนย์วิจัยทรัพยากร
 ภาควิชาภาษาศาสตร์
 มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล