THE PHONG LANGUAGE OF THE ETHNIC PHONG WHICH LIVE NEAR THE MELHIR MUONG PON MEGALITH IN LAOS

(Field Work Notes)

An introduction of data and description.¹

Bùi Khánh Thạc

1. Phong is the language of more than 18000 (1985) people scattered in the area of the Muong Pon Megalith, Sam Nua Province, Laos (see Map). Phong belongs to the Khu subgroup of the Austro-Asiatic language family. The term Phong is also self-calling Ethno used to refer to their community, so it begins the ethno-names of their different subgroups: Phong Phen, Phong Piet, Phong Lan, etc. From ancient times the Phong people have probably had close contact with other languages, especially with Lao, since they are located in the same area.

The description of the Phong language in this paper is based on the material collected by myself during fieldwork in September 1971 in Muong Pon (Province Sam Nua, Laos). The field materials were of three kinds:

1/ A vocabulary of about 1,200 items comprising words of the main subjects spheres: numerals, pronouns, objects, actions, qualities and states.

2/ A set of clauses and sentences collected with the help of a grammatical questionnaire.

3/ Conversations between researcher and Phong informators using Lao as a contact language. The topics of these conversations were some of the legends on their ethnic origin, religions and occupations.

2. In the typological aspect, Phong belongs to the group of isolating languages.

2.1. The majority of Phong syllables are C₁VC₂. There are also open syllables C₁V:

C₁V – gu – chest, breast ;  kwa – more, too ;kpo – flat basket
C₁VC₂ – yoh – jacket ;  ewan – teat, nipple ; srmos – needle

2.2. Charts of Phong vowels and diphthongs (using the IPA system).

¹ This is an improved and condensed version of a previous paper by the same title published by Hanoi University in 1973 in Vietnamese only. This English revision contains an annex of 1,200 Phong words glossed in both English and Vietnamese which are being published for the first time.
### Table 1: Initial Consonants

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<th>Points of Articulation</th>
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In the C₁ there are also 75 two-element-clusters and 12 three-element-clusters which can occur. The attested combinations are shown in the table 2 and in example below.