

THE LIMITS AND CONNECTIONS OF AUSTROASIATIC IN THE NORTHEAST

by

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We shall examine the problems presented by the connections of the Austroasiatic languages with Cham, Vietnamese, the Thai languages, and the Miao languages.

Distinguishing between families of languages, and ascertaining to what family a given language belongs are both done more easily in Europe than in eastern Asia. In Europe the morphology and the grammatical structure make it easy to distinguish between an Indo-European language and a Finno-Ugric or a Semitic language. Because the languages of eastern Asia have neither regular nor irregular inflections, and because the syntax of these languages is often the same, comparative linguists must work almost entirely with vocabulary. Until now there have been ambiguous cases which each linguist has resolved according to his own theories and attitudes. When a language 'A' has a part of its vocabulary in common with a language 'B' and another part in common with a language 'C', one can say that language 'A' is a 'mixed language' (*Mischsprache*). Both W. Schmidt and H. Maspero speak of 'mixed languages' – Schmidt in referring to Cham, and Maspero to Vietnamese; but, still wanting to give a genetic classification for these languages, they arbitrarily classified 'A' with 'C' (Cham with Mon-Khmer, and Vietnamese with Thai).

Today we have other theories. From the genetic point of view there is no such thing as a 'mixed language'. Either the two parts of the vocabulary are equivalent, in which case 'A', 'B', and 'C' are members of the same language family, or the two parts of the vocabulary are not equivalent. One part is original and the other is borrowed. 'A' which is related to 'B' has borrowed a part of its vocabulary from 'C' (Cham is Austronesian, and Vietnamese is Austroasiatic).

Since 1875 when vocabularies and texts on Cham and its dialects were

published,¹ speculations on the nature of the relationship between Cham and Malay have begun to appear. We can classify these as belonging to either of two points of view, one concerned with linguistic affiliations, and the other with geographic origins.

Genetic affiliations with the Indonesian languages were shown by H. Kern,² Ernst Kuhn,³ and G. K. Niemann,⁴ but K. Himly⁵ and W. Schmidt⁶ preferred to consider Cham a mixed language related to Austroasiatic. W. Schmidt was recognized as the originator of the term 'Austroasiatic', and the creator of the 'Austrie' group which brought together Austroasiatic and Austronesian, and his opinion on the place of Cham was often accepted by non-specialists. One even finds it in Salzner's Atlas.⁷ How-

¹ Dr. A. Morice, "Étude sur deux dialectes de l'Indo-Chine. Les Tiams et les Stiengs", *Revue de Linguistique* (Paris, Maisonneuve, 1875). R. Humann, *Vocabulaire français-tiamé* (Saigon, autogr., n.d.). A. Landes, *Contes Tjames*, textes et caractères tjames, accompagnés de la transcription du premier conte en caractères romains et d'un lexique (Saigon, autogr., 1886). E. Aymonier, *Grammaire de la langue Chame ou Tchame* (Paris, Leroux, 1889) (This has also appeared in *Excursions et Reconnaissances*, 31, Saigon, 1889). – Note that the genealogical connections of the Cham people have already been discussed in Crawford, *Grammar and Dictionary of the Malay Language* (London, 1852) and in A. Bastian, *Sprachvergleichende Studien mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Indochinesischen Sprachen* (Leipzig, 1870) and particularly by a French missionary, M. C. Fontaine (1815-71) who stated: "The greater part of these dialects, especially Charay, Redai, Candio and Penong have so many common points of contact that they can only be considered as branches of a single trunk. After having lived among these tribes for several years, and having been obliged to return to Singapore because of precarious health, I was surprised, after a short study of Malay, to find that it contained a great number of Charay words, and an even greater number of words such as the numerals, which showed a marked similarity in the two languages. I have no doubt that these similarities would be found to be still more striking by those who undertook a 'study in depth' of these two languages; their grammatical construction is absolutely identical." *Annales de l'Extrême Orient*, Paris, Challamel, 1882-83, 5, 264. The first Jarai vocabulary published was that of J. Moura, *Le royaume du Cambodge* (Paris, Leroux, 1883), tome I, pp. 440-47 and 501-5.

² H. Kern, "Taalkundige gegevens ter bepaling van het stamland der Malaisch-Polynesische volken", *Versl. en Med. der Kon. Akad. van Wetenschappen*, III r., 6, p. 270.

³ Ernst Kuhn, "Beiträge zur Sprachkunde Hinterindiens", *Sitzungber. d. k. bayer. Ak. d. Wiss. Philos.-philol. Cl.*, München, 1889, 2 teil, pp. 190-236.

⁴ G. K. Niemann, "Bijdrage tot de kennis der verhouding van het Tjam tot de talen van Indonesië", *Bijdr. tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Ned. Indië*, 1891, pp. 27-44.

⁵ K. Himly, "Sprachvergleichende Untersuchung des Wortschatzes der Tscham-Sprache", *Sitzungber. d. k. bayer. Akad. d. Wis., Philos.-philol. Cl.*, München, 1890, 3. Heft.

⁶ W. Schmidt, "Die Mon-Khmer-Völker, ein Bindeglied zwischen Völkern Zentralasiens und Austronesiens", *Archiv für Anthropologie*, 5 (Braunschweig, 1906), and a French translation in *BEFEO*, 7, p. 223 (Hanoi 1907), and also *Die Sprachfamilien und Sprachenkreise der Erde* (Heidelberg, 1926), pp. 135-47.

⁷ R. Salzner, *Sprachenatlas des indopazifischen Raumes* (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1960).

ever, Kern's opinion: 'Cham is as much Mon-Khmer as – say – Tahitian',⁸ has been accepted by the specialists.⁹

As early as 1877 Dr. Hamy drew the following conclusions from this view:

If the Chams are not the only tribes on the peninsula who speak a Malay language, and if all the tribes of the principal range of the western mountains have this language in common with the Chams, we must regard the ethnic group of which the Piaks, the Charays, and the Chams are the branches as a true continental Malay group; the immigration of the Menang Kabeu was no more than a simple episode in the history of the race, and it is in the Indo-Chinese mountains and not in Sumatra that one must seek the origin of a people who have played the most important role in the history of Western Oceania.¹⁰

This opinion was also shared by both Kern and Schmidt, and for half a century the mountain peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were called Indonesian by French authors, even though they spoke Austro-asiatic languages.

Only twenty years ago, P. K. Benedict¹¹ showed that the continental origins of the Austronesian languages were to be sought further north toward the coast of Kuangtung. Later, the study of I. Dyen on *q in Austronesian¹² showed that the treatment of *q > h was peculiar to western Indonesia (Java and Sumatra). We may conclude from this that Cham and its dialects belong to this group. The change of *q > h must have been made in Java and Sumatra even though in the extreme north-western extension of the group one finds the Selung language of the Mergui islands of Burma where *q > k.¹³

⁸ E. Aymonier and A. Cabaton, *Dictionnaire Cam-français* (Paris, Leroux, 1906), page vi.

⁹ For example by Henri Maspero in the article which he wrote in his brother's book, G. Maspero, *Un empire colonial français, l'Indochine* (Paris, Van Oest, 1929), t. 1, p. 66. One must always remember that in 1912, H. Maspero seemed to follow implicitly W. Schmidt in putting Cham with Mon-Khmer in his tables, *BEFEO*, 12.

¹⁰ In *La Nature*, 8, IX (1877), p. 292, according to *Annales de l'Extrême Orient*, 5, 264 (Paris, 1882-83).

¹¹ P. K. Benedict, "Thai, Kadai and Indonesian: a new alignment in Southeastern Asia", *Am. Anthr.*, 44, pp. 576-601.

¹² I. Dyen, *The Proto-Malayo-Polynesian Laryngeals* (= *W. D. Whitney Ling. Ser.*) (Baltimore, 1953), with the correction that q is not a laryngeal but a uvular.

¹³ Walter G. White, *An Introduction to the Mawken Language* (Toungoo, SPG. Mission Press, 1911), and some words in J. R. Logan, "The Silong tribe of the Mergui Archipelago", *J. of the Ind. Arch.*, 4 (1850), pp. 411-412; John Anderson, *The Selungs of the Margui Archipelago* (1889); W. J. S. Carrapiett, *The Salons, Ethnographical Survey of India, Burma 2* (Rangoon, Gov. Press, 1909).

	<i>Selung</i>	<i>Malay</i>	<i>Cham</i>
liver	katai	hati	hatai
shrimp	kodang	hudang	hudang
rain	kujang	hujang	hujang
black	ketam	hitam	hitam
thigh	paka	paha	pha
trunk	pokon	pohon	phun
year	takon	tahun	thun
branch	dakan	dahan	dhan
earth	tanak	tanah	tanäh
blood	dalak	darah	darah
to beat	bonok	bunoh	banuh

Finally, there exists, at least in Sumatra, an Austroasiatic substratum which has contributed to the similarity between Cham and the laungage of Aceh.¹⁴ (There even exist in Malay Mon-Khmer words unknown in Cham, for example, 'crab', *ketam*,¹⁵ Bahnar *kötam*, Khmer *ktam*, Mon *gatam*, Samre *tham*, Khasi *tham*, Wa *tam*.)

The delicate problem with which the Austroasiatic comparative linguist is faced is that of finding the words in the languages which surround Cham: Maa, Mnong, Bahnar, which have been borrowed in the course of centuries of Cham domination. The borrowed words may come from Sanskrit, but one also finds them in Mon and in Khmer and in the dialects influenced by Mon and Khmer; they may come from Indonesian but in order to be certain of their Indonesian origin, one must do more than find them in Java and Sumatra, since the Indonesian languages of these regions have borrowed Austroasiatic words.

The affiliation of Vietnamese has been the occasion for even more protracted misunderstandings. On the basis of syntax and vocabulary this language has been related to Mon by J. R. Logan,¹⁶ C. J. F. S. Forbes,¹⁷ Fr. Müller,¹⁸ E. Kuhn,¹⁹ and W. Schmidt,²⁰ this in spite of the

¹⁴ H. J. K. Cowan, "Aantekeningen betreffende de verhouding van het Atjehsch tot de Mon-Khmer talen", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederl. Indië*, 1948, t. 104, pp. 429-514. Summarised in: H. J. K. Cowan, "Prospects of a 'Papuan' Comparative linguistics", *Bijdr. ...*, t. 113, pp. 73-75.

¹⁵ H. J. Pinnow, *Versuch einer Historischen Lautlehre der Khariasprache*, p. 77 (59).

¹⁶ J. R. Logan, "Ethnology of the Indo-Pacific Islands", *Journ. of the Indian Archipelago*, 6 (1852), p. 658.

¹⁷ C. J. F. S. Forbes, *Comparative Grammar of Further India* (London, Allen, 1881).

¹⁸ Fr. Müller, *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, Bd. 4 (Wien, 1888), p. 222.

¹⁹ Ernst Kuhn, *Beiträge ... id.* (3).

²⁰ Wilhelm Schmidt, *Grundzüge einer Lautlehre der Mon-Khmer Sprachen* (Wien, Holder, 1905).