PROTO-PEARIC AND THE CLASSIFICATION OF PEARIC

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1. Introduction

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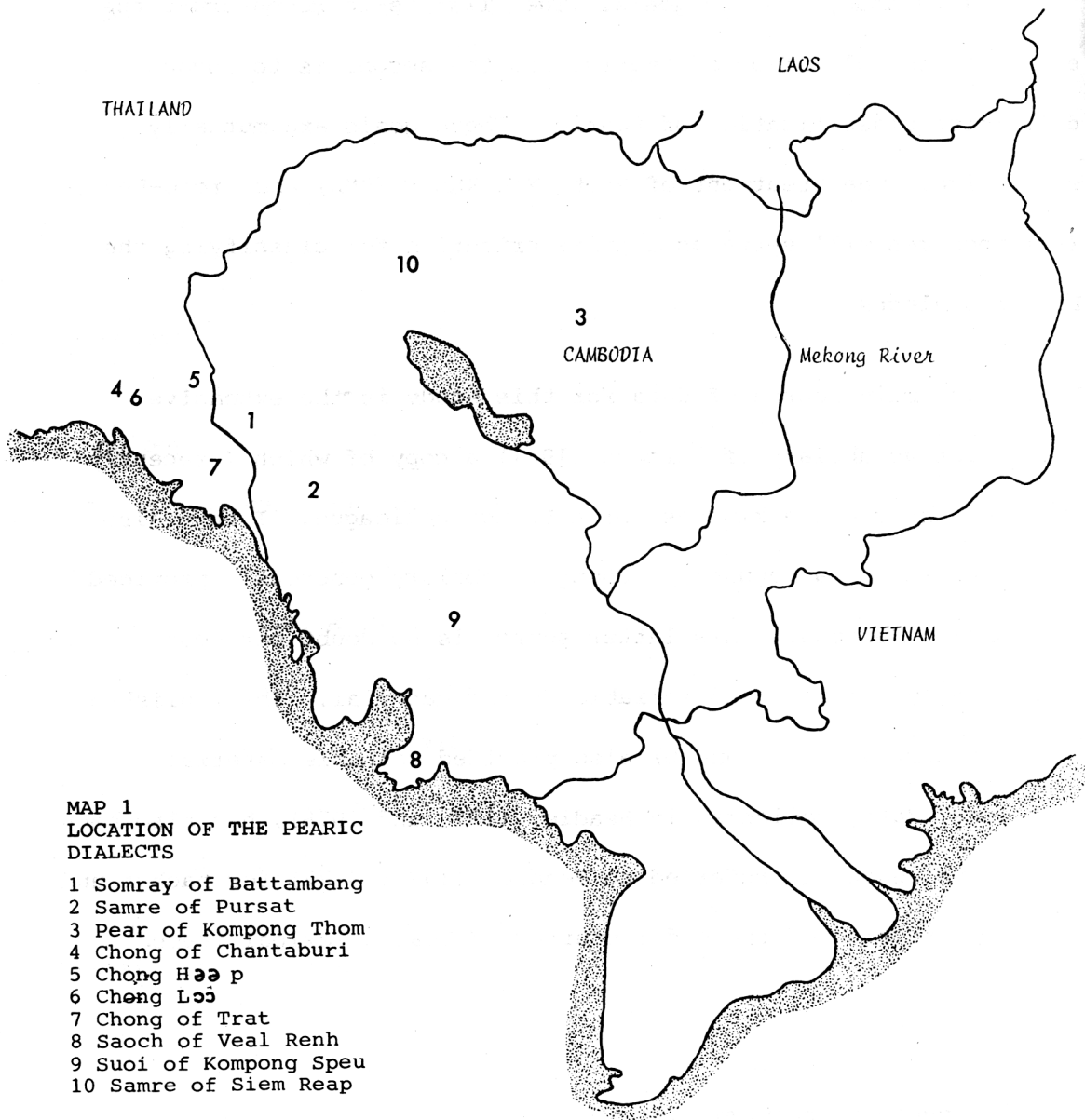
1. INTRODUCTION

This study has two goals. The first is to reconstruct the earliest possible stage of Pearic, and the second is to suggest a definitive classification of Pearic. These goals are mutually supportive. The treatment of Proto-Mon-Khmer (PMK) and Proto-Pearic (PP) phonemes will serve as a prime criterion for classifying the Pearic dialects.

The main source of data for this study is the extensive manuscript vocabulary of Baradat (1941) a copy of which I recently obtained through the kindness of a French colleague. I have also drawn heavily on a manuscript Chong vocabulary generously provided by Franklin Huffman. This latter source is no doubt our most phonetically detailed and reliable Pearic material. The published works of Martin (1974a and b) also provided valuable material. Additional data, collected in Headley (1977 and 1978), has also been used. The reader is referred to Headley (1977:69-72) for background and a description of the older sources of Pearic lexical items.[1]

2. PHONOLOGY

2.1 CONTEMPORARY PHONETIC SYSTEM

The Pearic word seems to have the same canonic shape as the word in most other Mon-Khmer languages. It consists of a single

THAILAND

LAOS

10

3

CAMBODIA

Mekong River

5

4 6

1

7

2

9

VIETNAM

8

MAP 1
LOCATION OF THE PEARIC
DIALECTS

1 Somray of Battambang
2 Samre of Pursat
3 Pear of Kompong Thom
4 Chong of Chantaburi
5 Choŋ Həə p
6 Chəŋ Lɔɔ́
7 Chong of Trat
8 Saoch of Veal Renh
9 Suoi of Kompong Speu
10 Samre of Siem Reap

stressed syllable which may be preceded by a weakly stressed pre-syllable. The formulae below show the various components of the main syllable (MS) and the pre-syllable (PS).

$$MS \longrightarrow C_1 \quad (C_2) \quad V_1 \quad (F_1)$$
$$PS \longrightarrow C_3 \quad (C_4) \quad V_2 \quad (F_2)$$

There are certain limitations on the membership in each one of these components. C_1, which represents any consonant that can occur initially at the beginning of a stressed syllable, can be any consonant; C_2, any consonant which can follow a C_1, includes /p t k m n ŋ v y s r l/. C_3 is any consonant which can occur as the initial consonant in a presyllable, and is apparently limited to /p t k s l/, and C_4 is limited to /r/ and /l/. V_1 represents any vowel or vowel cluster which can occur as the nucleus of a stressed syllable. Short vowels are not found in open syllables. V_2, the vowel nucleus of the presyllable, is a neutral vowel /ə/ which varies between [ɔ-ɑ-a-i]. F_1, any final consonant in a stressed syllable, may be /p t c k ? m n ñ ŋ v y h r l/ and F_2, the final consonant of a presyllable, is limited to /m n ñ ŋ l/. The presyllable is reduced to zero in some of the Chong dialects of Thailand.