AN OFFICIAL ORTHOGRAPHY FOR C'TU LANGUAGE

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From the general population investigation on the first, April 1979, General Department of Viet Nam statistics has used Cotu people. This name is called from researching consequence of Ethnic Institute — Social Science Committee (National Center of social and humanities now).Inspite of that, the researchers of linguistics have still named Katu while Cotu people have never accepted it. C'tu or Cotu which is named by Cotu people themselves means living at upstream or along the rivers. From now on, we should call the unified name, Cotu people, Cotu language. On the similar situation, although there have been three writing systems suggested, Cotu writing has not become a part of Cotu people's life yet.

With the population of approximately 50.000 living in Viet Nam and over 10.000 in Laos, Cotu people live scatteredly, stretching from A Luoi, Nam Dong districts (Thua Thien — Hue province) toward Hien and Nam Giang distrcts (Quang Nam province) of eastern side of Truong Son chain mountain belonging to Viet Nam to Dac Chung and Ka Lum districts of Xe Kong province, Laos. Because residential regions are separated by high mountains and deep valley, local accents and dialect being complicated make disadvantages to be aware phonemics of Cotu language as well as to choose standard accent region for an official orthography of Cotu language. Therefore, things done by domestic and foreign researchers of languistics are great, lost much time and very precious. Before showing some suggestions to a total solution of phonematics and of unified writing system, we can sketch Cotu phonetic in relation to the former solutions.

I- Ouline of Cotu phonetics and the phonemic divided solution and agreed graphic signs of writing system.

Up to now, researchers' acknowledgement to Cotu phonemic system has not unified yet. Besides, the symbols used for vowels and consonants have not been either. The foreign authors like Nancy.A.Costello, Judith Wallace chose some symboles being appropriate with English. For exampe, sound /d/ is distinguished with /ʔd/ by the letters [d] and [đ]. On the contrary, Conh Ta Lang and Conh Axoʻp want how to write Cotu language being close to Vietnamese with [đ] /ʔd/ and [đh] /d/. In fact, Cotu phonemes is a complicated system. It is necessary to have a seminar lead to determine the most reasonable and unified writing system. Chu Quoc Ngu contains many unreasonable things that we have known but the options of writing Cotu will not be able not to consider the advantages of usage bilingual Cotu- Vietnamese in this ethnic community in Viet Nam. A domestic author chose the letter [c] which is equivalent to [ch] in Vietnamese.This thing embarasses to the Cotu pupils in the first grade having to writing two different letters for two similar sounds, otherwise for the only sound. For example, *cha* in Cotu language means to eat , is pronounced like *cha* meant father in Vietnamese; so, why do they have to write them differently? Using [c, k, q] for an only phoneme in Vietnamese is so surplus; we can delete some or distribute accurately for Cotu writing system but letter [c] should not represent the sound / ts / like pasigraphy. Similarly, N. A. Costello has used the letter [d] represented the sound / d / in Cotu language that is reasonable in English speaker's phonetic perception. But in Cotu native speaker's phonetic perception, there is a obvious distinction between the sound / ʔd / like [đ] in Vietnamese and the sound / d /, lighter, softer, transfering apical sound, retracted to apical, retracted, gum, like [d] in English. So, do we agree with Costello's [d] or Conh Ta Lang's [đh]? The above facts are some typical examples, in fact, Cotu phonetic is more complicated with pre-nasal sound, glottocclusive sound / ʔ / being alone or accompanying

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consonants / ?b /, / ?d /. In addition, because the phonetic reduction has taken place, some affixes exist as pre-syllables combined and becoming the clusters such as double consonant [t'r] (*t'rcha* — to tab each other with knif), [mr] (*mr·hal* — eager), [xr] (*xrmil* — mirror); there are even tri-consonant like [đrn] (*đrnâât* — mountain pass , *đrnưtc* — hairpin).

About vowels system, researchers' phonetic ears are different. After N. A. Costello and J. Wallace, there are 25 vowels consisting of 3 diphthongs, 11 pairs of short and long monophthongs. And after Quach Xân, there are too much of 39 vowels. Lately, Nguyen Huu Hoanh has recognized 27 vowels consisting of 3 diphthongs and 12 pair of short and long monophthongs. For reference, we extract three systems as they were remarked above:

a/ Quach Xan had just shown without description.

Vowels:

a ả á â   oo oỏ oó
e ẻ é   ô ổ ố
ê ể ế   ơ ở ớ
êê êể êế ơơ ởơ ớơ
i ỉ í   uu u ủ ú
o ỏ ó   ưư ư ử ứ

Consonants:

b c d đ g h k l m n r s t v x j z y p q.

b/ Nancy A. Costello

Vowels: (các nguyên âm).

	Front	Central	Back
Glided	iê	ươ	uô
high	i ii	ư ưư	u uu
mid	ê êê	ơ ơơ	ô ôô
low close	e ee	â ââ	o oo
low high		a aa	ó óó

Consonants: (các phụ âm)

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Alveopalatal	Velar
stops.v.unasp	p	t	ch	k
vl. asp	ph	th	s	kh
vd	b	d	j	g
glottal	ƀ	đ	dy	q
liquids	v	l,r	y	h
nasals	m	n	nh	ng

c/ Theo Nguyễn Hữu Hoành:

Hệ thống các nguyên âm.

	Trước		giữa		sau	
Nhỏ	i [i]	ị [ⁿ]	ư [ɣ]	ự [□□]	u [u]	ụ [□]
Nhỏ vừa	ê [e]	ệ [□]	ơ [□]	ợ [□□]	ô [o]	ộ [□]

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Lớn vừa	e [ũ]	ẹ [□□]	â [□]	ậ [□□]	o [□]	ọ [□ □]
Lớn	E [ổ]	ẹ [ổ□]	a [a]	ạ [ă]	A [ị]	ạ [ị□]
Nguyên âm đôi	iê [ie]		ươ [□□]		uô [uo]	

Hệ thống các phụ âm.

	Môi	Đầu lưỡi (lợi)	Mặt lưỡi (ngạc)	Gốc lưỡi (mạc)	Họng
tắc - vô thanh	P [p]	t [t]	c [c]	k [k]	q [?]
bật hơi	ph [p']	th [t']	s [h̄']	kh [k']	
hữu thanh	b [b]	d [d]	J [j̄]	g [g]	
bán hữu thanh	ɓ [ɓ]	đ [d̠]	ʃ [J]		
xát	v [v]	l/r [l/r]	y [j]		h [h]
mũi	m [m]	n [n]	nh [ɲ]	ng [□]	

c/ Nguyễn Hữu Hoành:

Hệ thống các nguyên âm.

	Trước		giữa		sau	
Nhỏ	i [i]	ị [□]	ư [□]	ự [□□]	u [u]	ụ [□]
Nhỏ vừa	ê [e]	ệ [□]	ơ [□]	ợ [□□]	ô [o]	ộ [□]
Lớn vừa	e [□]	ẹ [□□]	â [□]	ậ [□□]	o [□]	ọ [□ □]
Lớn	E [ổ]	ẹ [ổ□]	a [a]	ạ [ă]	A [ị]	ạ [ị□]
Nguyên âm đôi	iê [ie]		ươ [□□]		uô [uo]	

Hệ thống các phụ âm.

	Môi	Đầu lưỡi (lợi)	Mặt lưỡi (ngạc)	Gốc lưỡi (mạc)	Họng
tắc - vô thanh	P [p]	t [t]	c [c]	k [k]	q [?]
bật hơi	ph [p']	th [t']	s [h̄']	kh [k']	
hữu thanh	b [b]	d [d]	J [j̄]	g [g]	
bán hữu thanh	ɓ [ɓ]	đ [d̠]	ʃ [J]		
xát	v [v]	l/r [l/r]	y [j]		h [h]
mũi	m [m]	n [n]	nh [ɲ]	ng [□]	

To discuss a reasonable phonemic solution of Cơtu, maybe it should be started from the description of the structure of Cơtu syllable. They exist such the monosyllabic words as *moon* (to say), *lêi* (to look), *xââng* (to hear), *vộih* (to go), *cha* (to eat boiled foots), *đáh* (to eat meat, fishes), *pá* (to eat, then to let dregs out of mouth, example eating sugar cane), *moóc* (to eat bakered foot)...or members of polysyllabic word (consisting of disyllabic simple word and the

polysyllabic derivative word). The polysyllabic derivative word consisting of a main syllable and one or many attached syllables. The main syllable often contains stress, has the same structure with the monosyllabic word [c+_cv or cv+_c]. Phonetic structure of the monosyllabic simple word is the typical structure of Cơtu syllable formula. After the phonemic phonetic view, the monosyllabic simple word can be based to divise the phonemes, although, in addition to a main syllable, the double syllable word and the polysyllable word still contain attached syllables but they have not sufficient structure like above.

The Cơtu syllable contains from one to three possible segmental phoneme (ideal formula) and can be arranged in two ways:

3   1 2
C+_C V
   C V+_ C
        3

- if factor (3) formed at the biginning of syllable, it will combine and become a initial cluster such as *cmoo* (year), *dnáh* (meat), *crêê* (right), *prí* (banana), *t'rỉ* (buffalo),...

- if factor (3) formed at the end of syllable, it will link vowel becoming " vần" (it makes the prosody in phonetic of a poem ...) such as *choom* (to be able to), *bêch* (to sleep), *xông dông* (home mouse)...However, it seems hard to determine " vần" in some syllables with glottocclusive final sounds / ? /, / h / such as *ớh* (used at the end of the sentences to express a suggestion), *báh* (to carry baby on the back), *căh* (no)...

Especially, the Cơtu syllables are still perceived clearly with prosodies consisting of the stress and the high or low accent. Within many words, these prosodies reveal phonemic difference. To justify the existence of tones and the Cơtu tonetization process in condition that contacts with Vietnamese, we whould like showing some cases which really contain phonemic contrariety. From phonetic intuit, we try describing the following phenomenon: there are available the words such as *bêê?* (classifier of thing), *dadá* (điệu múa nữ), *la* (if), *lah* (to cleave)...in Cơtu language. Throughout the contact, it has been had the access of words *bếê?* (to put up), dada (mother in law), *lá lang* (leaves of sweet potataes)...The difference between each couple of words has a meaning difference, the phonemic valuation:

Eveness range: bêê?   dada   la

High range: bếê?   dadá   lá lang

This phenomenon also has taken place in Cơtu vocabulary itself:

Eveness range: zơ (wine jar)

High range: zớ (to postpone)   cabhrế (đáng kiếp)

Medium range: cabhrể (dai dẳng)

II- Being a researcher of teaching Vietnamese - Cơtu bilingual pupils, we would like showing some suggestions:

1/ Concerning phonological solution.

- The first thing is that phonem / t / as in the word trơtrô (meaning jealous, synonymous with mamâu), ơngtrưah...ơngtrưah (two actions occur at the same time), mơtrưah (at the same time) needs to be added to the system of consonant phonemes.

- The second thing is that each of the elements which change according to high and low registers like tone should be acknowleged since they specifically help to discriminate the meaning between words. For example:

+ zơ ---→ wine jar + cabhrế---→ to deserve well as a punishment + dada---→mother in law

+ zớ ---→ postpone + cabhrể---→ prolonged   + dadá---→female dance