

HU – A LANGUAGE WITH UNORTHODOX TONOGENESIS

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In this article I will describe and analyse a small vocabulary I collected in September 1984 from a native speaker of Hu /xúʔ/, a Mon-Khmer language spoken by about 1000 persons in a few villages in the Xiǎo Měngyǎng area in Jīnghóng county, Sipsong Panna (Xīshuāng Bǎnnà), Yúnnán province, China. The Hu are known among the local Chinese as Kōnggě.

Hu belongs to the little-known Angkuic group of the Palaungic branch of the Mon-Khmer languages. Small Angkuic populations are scattered over south-western Yúnnán province, and in another article (Svantesson 1988) I describe the language of another of these, U, spoken in the village Pǎi Xep (Bāngxié) in Shuāngjiāng county.

The place of Angkuic within the Palaungic branch is shown in the following table according to Diffloth (1982a):

Palaungic
East Palaungic
Waic
Angkuic
Lamet
West Palaungic
Danaw
Riang
Rumai

Although my material is too small to allow a complete synchronic phonemic analysis, the most important historical developments in Hu can be inferred from it. From a general phonological point of view, the most interesting phenomenon is the development of a two-tone system where the tones are not the reflexes of voiced/voiceless proto-initials, as is most often the case in Mon-Khmer two-tone (or two-register) languages. Instead, the tones are the reflexes of the long/short vowel opposition which existed in Proto-Palaungic (inherited from Proto-Mon-Khmer). As far as I know, no language with this kind of tonogenesis has been described before.

Initial consonants

The Angkuic languages are characterised by a 'Germanic' development of the initial stops—that is to say, voiceless stops have become aspirated, and voiced stops have become voiceless unaspirated. This is illustrated by the following examples:

Hu	U	Lamet	N. Kammu	S. Kammu	
<i>*voiceless</i>					
<i>phɨn</i>	<i>phèt</i>	<i>pɨn</i>	<i>pɨn</i>	<i>pɨn</i>	'to shoot'
<i>thən</i>	<i>thân</i>	<i>táaŋ</i>	<i>táaŋ</i>	<i>taaŋ</i>	'to weave'
<i>khàp</i>	<i>khap</i>	<i>káap</i>	<i>káap</i>	<i>kaap</i>	'jaw'
<i>*voiced</i>					
<i>pàn</i>	<i>pán</i>	<i>pàaŋ</i>	—	—	'white'
<i>pɕí?</i>	<i>qí</i>	<i>prii?</i>	<i>pri?</i>	<i>bri?</i>	'forest'
<i>phltàk</i>	<i>?atǎʰ</i>	<i>pltàak</i>	<i>ktáak</i>	<i>kdaak</i>	'palm (of hand)'
<i>kàŋ</i>	<i>kǎã</i>	—	<i>kàaŋ</i>	<i>gaan</i>	'house'
<i>kák</i>	<i>káʰ</i>	<i>kàk</i>			'to bite'

In Southern Kammu (as recognised from Lindell *et al.* 1981), the original Proto-Mon-Khmer voicing contrast is retained. The unaspirated stops in the Angkuic languages Hu and (Pañ Xep) U correspond to voiced stops in Southern Kammu, and the aspirated stops correspond to voiceless unaspirated. Original voiced and voiceless stops have merged in Lamet (Rmêt; from Lindell *et al.* 1978) and Northern (Yúan) Kammu, giving rise to lax and tense register in Lamet, and low and high tone in Northern Kammu, as is the case in Mon-Khmer and other languages with 'orthodox' register or tone development*. The examples also show that the Hu tones are not the result of orthodox tonogenesis.

Hu has a contrast between initial *s-* (with the allophone [ç] before *i*, and in the word *sɕéŋ* 'red') and *θ-*, an opposition which is not present in U or other Angkuic languages, but which is found in Danaw (Luce 1965), as a contrast between *ts-* and *θ-*. In Lamet, and in the rest of Palaungic (and in Kammuic), Hu *s-* and *θ-* correspond to *s-* and *h-*, respectively. Diffloth (1977) and Ferlus (1978) reconstruct these as Proto-Mon-Khmer **c-* and **s-*, respectively. According to Diffloth (1977), **c-* became **ts-* in Proto-Palaungic. Examples are:

	Hu	U	Lamet	Danaw	
<i>*c-</i>	<i>sɕ?</i>	<i>sò</i>	<i>sɕ?</i>	<i>tso</i> ¹	'dog'
	<i>salé?</i>	<i>salè</i>	<i>slèɛ?</i>	<i>kǎlé</i> ¹	'rain'
	<i>nsí?</i>	<i>nchí</i>	<i>sí?</i>	<i>tsi</i> ¹	'louse'

*In the Northern Kammu form *ktáak*, the tone is determined by the voiceless *k*. (Ed.)

*s-	<i>θúm</i>	<i>sùp</i>	<i>húum</i>	<i>θɔn</i> ⁴	'to bathe'
	<i>paθén</i>	<i>sét</i>	<i>phɛ̃n</i>	<i>pǎθén</i> ⁴	'snake'
	<i>θaʔɛ̃n</i>		<i>sʔɔɛ̃n</i>		'dry'
	<i>θamāʔ</i>	<i>samà</i>	<i>ʔmāaʔ</i>		'wind'

U has the regular reflex *ch-* of **c-* after minor syllables, as in the example 'louse'. Proto-Palaungic also had **h-*, which is retained as such in all languages but, unfortunately, I failed to elicit any word with **h-* in Hu.

There are some words in which Palaungic *s-* corresponds to *c-* in Kammu—they include Hu *sáy* 'bitter', Kammu *cáy*. Here, Ferlus reconstructs **ts-* in Palaungic, Kammuic and Viet-Muong (corresponding to two Proto-Mon-Khmer initials, **ts-* and **ts̥-*).

Minor syllables

As in other Northern Mon-Khmer languages, most non-compound words are monosyllabic or sesquisyllabic, i.e. consisting of a major syllable preceded by an unstressed minor syllable (cf. Shorto 1960). Minor syllables have a syllabic sonorant (such as *m* in *θmphúp* 'lung') or a (probably) non-contrasting vowel which I have written as *a* (*kaʔà* 'two').

There is also a contrast between *θ-* and *s-* minor syllable initial in Hu (and in one word, *ts-* is attested). This opposition is not maintained in this position in U, Lamet or Proto-Waic (=PW; Diffloth 1980), where the most common corresponding initial is *s-*:

Hu	U	Lamet	PW	
<i>θanàt</i>	<i>nát</i>	<i>snàat</i>	* <i>snat</i>	'gun'
<i>θaʔàw</i>	<i>saʔá</i>	<i>sʔáar</i>		'sour'
<i>θaʔɛ̃n</i>		<i>sʔɔɛ̃n</i>		'dry'
<i>θavàŋ</i>	<i>savàã</i>			'to ask'
<i>θathán</i>	<i>sathât</i>			'old'
<i>θatháʔ</i>	<i>sathà</i>	<i>ntáaʔ</i>	* <i>sntaʔ</i>	'tail'
<i>θamāʔ</i>	<i>samà</i>	<i>ʔmāaʔ</i>	* <i>ʔmaʔ</i>	'wind'
<i>θmphúp</i>	<i>saphöp</i>			'lung'
<i>samóʔ</i>	<i>samò</i>		* <i>smoʔ</i>	'stone'
<i>saléʔ</i>	<i>salè</i>	<i>slêeʔ</i>	* <i>hleʔ</i>	'rain'
<i>saplàŋ</i>	<i>saxáã</i>	<i>smplàaŋ</i>		'shoulder'
<i>saŋây</i>	<i>ŋây</i>	<i>ŋàay</i>	* <i>ŋay</i>	'eye'
<i>sŋkhóʔ</i>	<i>khù</i>		* <i>ŋkoʔ</i>	'yesterday'
<i>tsaŋàl</i>	<i>saŋên</i>	<i>sŋàal</i>	* <i>sŋal</i>	'blue'

Presumably, *θ-* and *s-* are the reflexes of Proto-Palaungic **s-* and **ts-* (< **c-*), respectively, which have merged into *s-* in U, as usual. It may be noted that **s-* has (at least in some cases) been retained in this position in

Lamet and Waic. As mentioned above, word initial *s- has usually become *h-* in these languages. There are irregularities, which may be due to more complex initial consonant clusters.

The occurrence of minor syllable initial *ts-* in *tsaŋəl* 'blue' suggests a different Proto-Palaungic consonant, presumably the reflex of Ferlus' (1978) *tš-, since the Kammu cognate is *çŋáar* with initial *c-*.

Hu has also retained the contrast between *s-* (< *ts- < *c-) and *θ-* (< *s-) in major syllable initial position after a nasal minor syllable:

Hu	U	Lamet	PW	
<i>nsíʔ</i>	<i>nchí</i>	<i>síʔ</i>	*siʔ	'louse'
<i>nasòk</i>	<i>sũʔ</i>	<i>yóok</i>	*hyok	'ear'
<i>nθàc</i>	<i>ntshăt</i>	<i>máac</i>	*hmac	'sand'
<i>nθim</i>	<i>nchìp</i>	<i>lmhiim</i>	*mhem	'claw'

Here, U has *s* in 'ear', where the minor syllable has disappeared, otherwise *ch* or *tsh* (which are probably allophones of a single phoneme). After a nasal minor syllable, *s* never occurs in U, but has developed into *tsh/ch*, which accounts for the unexpected occurrence of these consonants in the words for 'sand' and 'claw'.

Hu also has a number of words which have a nasal minor syllable followed by a voiceless nasal major syllable initial:

Hu	U	Lamet	PW	
<i>nŋàm</i>	<i>sanàm</i>	<i>náam</i>	*hnam	'blood'
<i>nŋim</i>	<i>sanəp</i>	<i>nəm</i>	*nym	'year'
<i>nŋăt</i>	<i>sanā</i>			'comb'
<i>nŋéʔ</i>	<i>nè</i>		*nʔneʔ	'meat'
<i>mŋúl</i>	<i>mùn</i>	<i>kmùul</i>	*kmil	'silver'
<i>nŋăt</i>	<i>nǎʔ</i>	<i>kŋàas</i>	*kpas	'to laugh'

The Hu forms suggest a *nasal + *h* initial cluster, while Lamet and Waic in some cases have clusters with a stop and a nasal. Taken together, this implies proto-forms with *stop + nasal + *h* clusters. Medial *h* has been lost in most of Palaungic (cf. Diffloth 1977), and in Hu, where *h* is retained, the initial stop has disappeared.

U often loses cluster initial stops (see Svantesson 1988), as is the case in the last three examples above. In the preceding list, the minor syllable *sa* in the first three words in U, taken together with evidence from outside Palaungic, suggests Proto-Mon-Khmer *j- (palatal voiced stop). This tallies perfectly with Diffloth's (1980:175) reconstruction of 'blood' as Proto-Mon-Khmer *Jnhaam. For the other two words, *jnh- clusters are also supported by evidence outside Palaungic: Kammu *çrias* (Southern Kammu *jrias*) 'comb', Mon *cnām* 'year'.