MORE ON VIET-MUONG TONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Since my attempt in 1973 to reconstruct the phonology of the ancestor of Vietnamese and Muong (Thompson 1976), considerable new information on this family has become available. In particular, Michel Ferlus has presented an admirable series of papers in which he provides data for some previously little known languages that are clearly related to Vietnamese, although apparently less closely than Muong Khen, on which my study had to depend, there being then no other language of the family represented by data of any extent in a consistent transcription. His first-hand experience with these languages and several others of the area provide the basis for a fine reassessment of the research. We shall note here his review of the composition of the family (Ferlus 1974a) and his overview of reconstruction with discussion of several important developments (Ferlus 1975). In the latter paper he gives quite extensive material from Thavung [tʻvɯˑŋ], enriching the material offered in another paper (Ferlus 1974b) on consonantal mutations in that language. It is heartening to find that much of what it seemed possible to propose in 1973 is confirmed by independent study that was being conducted during the same period.[1] On the other hand, the interesting material from Thavung and other languages calls for a reconsideration of my reconstruction, which I hope it will be possible to accomplish before long. This is not the place to undertake an extensive review of the implications of these new studies, but it seems appropriate to explore immediately some points which the new data bring up.[2]

Ferlus (1974a:70-1) proposes a classification of the family into four subgroups, one containing Thavung along with two or three less well known languages, a second including several poorly recorded dialects (primarily older material), a third containing Muong and another language in several little known dialects, and the fourth Vietnamese. Since the tones of most of these languages are inconsistently noted (or not noted at all), we cannot at this juncture tell much about how they compare with the tonal systems of Vietnamese, Muong, and Thavung, which are all now clearly described. Data are also too skimpy for systematic comparison of those other languages in other respects, too, but it is possible to get some general impressions. Even without full reconstruction, which is now a good ways in the future, I believe we can recognize some shared innovations which would set Muong (and perhaps the other language in Ferlus' third subgroup) and Vietnamese off from the rest of the family. In any case, they are clearly set apart from Thavung.

What is perhaps most interesting in this connection is the very different aspect of the tonal system of Thavung from that of Vietnamese and Muong. Ferlus (1974b:314) notes Thavung tones with raised numerals and describes the tones as follows:

Série haute	^{1}haut plain	^{3}haut glottal
Série basse	^{2}bas plain	^{4}bas glottal

He points out (1974b:316ff) that the level tones accompany not only syllables with final vowels and sonorants but also those with final stops and fricatives (-s and -h). These latter syllables correspond to syllables in Vietnamese and Muong with C tones, thus providing consistent support for Haudricourt's (1954) hypothesis of tone and final relationships. The glottal tones, on the other hand, correspond quite regularly to Vietnamese and Muong B tones, and quite consistently to syllables with final glottal stop in Khmu, again supporting Haudricourt's theory. Now the high tones of Thavung correspond to the first register tones of Vietnamese and Muong, and the low tones to the second register tones of those languages, just as the theory would have it--higher pitch being a natural concomitant of original voiceless initial consonants, lower pitch going with original voiced initials. It is not clear what Ferlus means by glottal tone, but we may at least expect that it involves some feature which *could* be analyzed as -?. With such a view the tonal system becomes two-term, high vs. low, a simple register system. Even without the reanalysis of the glottal tones, it is quite clear that the register opposition is already established, while the second *contour*, the B type tone, is just emerging, and C type has yet to develop (speaking from the point of view of the fully developed contour systems of Muong and Vietnamese). Now this is counter to Haudricourt's hypothesis, according to which the contour tones were thought to have developed first, their number subsequently being doubled by the development of registers as the initial voiced-voiceless contrast was merged. Or, speaking historically, Thavung makes clear that Proto-Viet-Muong must be reconstructed with final fricatives (or something from which they develop in Thavung), and the establishment of C tones and the development of the contour systems was an innovation in the subgroup to which both Muong and Vietnamese must belong. In fact, it seems likely that Proto-Viet-Muong was not a tone language at all. I suspect that fuller material will make it possible to show that Proto-Viet-Muong developed a Mon-Khmer type register system which elaborated vocalic differences in the two registers, and the tonal developments came later.[3] In the subgroup to which Muong and Vietnamese belong, the tone systems may well have developed as Haudricourt supposed, and the contour tones resulting from the loss of certain finals may have preceded the register split, although even here there are some doubts about when the C type tone emerged, and Gregerson and Thomas (1976) study the evidence and conclude that even the Vietnamese tone system may have begun with the register contrast.

Not surprisingly, there are a number of cases among the etymologies Ferlus cites in which the tone correspondences are not what is expected. I have shown that most of the discrepancies of tone register between Muong Khen and Vietnamese are taken care of as a by-product of the presyllables I proposed to explain the development in Vietnamese of voiced fricatives from original stops (Thompson 1976:1132ff). It is less easy to account for register discrepancies between Thavung and Vietnamese; Ferlus regards this as natural if the languages are more remotely related. But it again has an interesting implication for the history of register development in the family.

In the etymologies involving registral differences between Vietnamese and Thavung (culled from Ferlus' two papers presenting Thavung data) there are the two expected types. Where Thavung has a high tone (that is, first register) corresponding to Vietnamese second register tone (18 etymologies) there at first seems no rationale to the differences. However, I noted an interesting fact in surveying all the forms cited: the overwhelming majority of the Thavung words have first register tones; moreover, so far as I can see, there is only one Thavung word beginning with a sonorant having a second register tone (the word for 'mother', mA^{4}; 1974b:316).[4] We can include here words that earlier had *r, which has developed to h in Thavung. The hypothesis suggests itself that Thavung may have treated initial sonorants in the same way as initial voiceless obstruents, so far as the concomitant pitch was concerned. One explanation could be that in initial position voiceless consonants are unmarked in this language, while voiced obstruents are marked; sonorants, naturally voiced, are also unmarked, and there seems to be no suggestion of historical voiced vs. voiceless sonorants in initial position, although other languages of the area do show such an opposition. The fact that *r developed to voiceless h- also fits logically with these facts. In any case, if syllables with initial sonorants normally have first register tones, six of our 18 discrepancies are taken care of. Now another interesting fact is that Thavung presyllables apparently have the shape CV- and although several obstruents can fill the C- position, only one sonorant (m-) can (Ferlus 1974b:314). We may suspect that the proto-language permitted other sonorants in this position and they were lost in Thavung; these account for a number of the cases where Ferlus (1975:32ff) has to go outside Thavung to show cognates with presyllables corresponding to initial voiced fricatives in Vietnamese. It appears likely that several cases where Thavung has the presyllable (?)ə- an original sonorant was involved. Seven more of the discrepant etymologies would seem to require reconstruction of some presyllable, because Vietnamese shows a voiced fricative initial, but Thavung shows (?)ə- or no presyllable. One case shows the presyllable m- (i.e. mə-?). If these all had earlier sonorant initials, then again the first register tone would be explained. The remaining cases are Thavung jol^{3} 'arise' (Vietnamese zəy.), Tv hhiŋ^{3} 'body louse' (Middle Vn rən.), Tv pəcɔŋ^{1} 'husband' (Vn cəwŋ̀), and Tv təpah^{1} 'slap' (MVn βa˜; but modern dictionaries show vaˇ). Ferlus reconstructs *'j (preglottalized) for the initial in the first item; if we reconstruct rather *y-, as the

Vietnamese and Muong evidence seem to suggest (cf. Thompson 1976:1191 under 'wake, rise, get up'), we would have again a sonorant initial. 'Body louse' is xəñ¯ in the Khen dialect of Muong; I reconstructed *grəñ B, which is now cast in doubt. Ferlus cites Khmu mbriñ as cognate, which suggests another sonorant presyllable. 'Husband' is troublesome because Thavung shows a presyllable, yet Vietnamese did not develop the expected voiced fricative. This and other examples indicate that certain types of presyllables must have been lost earlier in the history of Vietnamese than those which set the stage for intervocalic voicing and spirantization. The final example might be explained as developing from a PVM *dəpah, with voicing assimilation of the initial in Thavung. That, of course, will require careful study of other cases to see whether some such voicing assimilation does operate.

The second type of discrepancy in register correspondences involves second register tones in Thavung but first register tones in Vietnamese. There are fewer examples in the material (12), but explanations are far more difficult to come by. Six cases show high vowels in Thavung (four cases of u, two of i), and relatively higher vowels is a characteristic of second register syllables in Mon-Khmer (cf. Gregerson 1976). Four others show diphthongization of the -iə-, -uə- type in Vietnamese, which might suggest first register adaptation. But both of these characteristics are found with the opposing registers in the material at hand. More material and careful study will be necessary to see better what may have caused these differences. If second register is indeed uncommon in Thavung, these forms in which Thavung shows unexpected second register are especially interesting.

The facts that we have had recourse to in our attempt to explain registral discrepancies lead us outside the domain of tone and serve to emphasize, I believe, that there are other respects in which Muong and Vietnamese may share innovations. It may be, then, that one direction for revision of my reconstruction is toward a proto-language for that subgroup. We have pre-empted Proto-Viet-Muong for the common ancestor of all these languages; Ferlus (1975:23) introduces the term 'Viet-muong commun' or 'pré-viet-muong' for any reconstruction utilizing only Vietnamese and Muong evidence. It is important to emphasize the specific reference of the second term in particular, because many comparatists will otherwise understand it as referring to that period before the time of Proto-Viet-Muong. Probably we need a different term; we can perhaps make do with Proto-Muong-Vietnamese for the common ancestor of those two languages if it turns out to be a needed concept.