

ON SOME LEXICOLOGICAL EQUIVALENTS BETWEEN THE
NYAH KUR (IN THAILAND) AND THE VIET - MUONG
LANGUAGES (IN VIETNAM)

Dr. TRAN TRI DOI
Department of Linguistics
Faculty of Philology
Hanoi University - VIETNAM.

1. According to the classification of the Mon-Khmer languages in South-east Asia suggested by Thomas and Headley (1970), the Nyah Kur language belongs to branch VI, the Monic branch, whereas the Viet-Muong languages belong to branch IX, the Viet-Muong branch.

1.1. According to L.T.Theraphan and G.Diffloth (1984), the speakers of Nyah Kur inhabit Thetchanbun, Chaiphum and Khorat provinces of Thailand, whereas those of Viet-Muong inhabit Vietnam and Laos: a) Vietnamese is the language of government in Vietnam; b) the languages of ethnic minorities such as **Muong** (Nguyen V.T, 1971; ANS, 1987), **Tho**, **Chut** with the dialects such as **May** (Tran T.D, 1986), **Sach**, **Malieng**, **Arem** (Tran T.D, 1983, 1990...), **Ruc** (Nguyen P.P, Tran T.D, M. Ferlus, 1988). The speakers of these language and dialects inhabit the mountainous areas of Hasonbinh, Thanhhoa, Nghetinh and Quangbinh provinces of Vietnam; c) **Thavung** (M. Ferlus, 1979) and **Pakatan** (M. Ferlus) are spoken in Laos Khammuon province. Thus, the Monic and Viet-Muong branches are not close to each other geographically.

1.2. Comparing the lexicon of Nyah Kun with those of the Viet-Muong, we do not intend to discuss more about the classification of the Mon-Khmer languages upon which Thomas has based his lexical statistics. Our aim is to provide an initial look at the Mon-Khmer origin of many Viet-Muong words which are difficult to recognize when compared within the group. And, based upon

their similarity, perhaps a way to explain several language changes in Vietnamese which are still uncertain could be found.

2. Discussing the origin of Vietnamese, Haudricourt (1954) stated "...la parenté du Vietnamien doit donc être recherchée au moyen du vocabulaire de base". The lexical correspondences between Viet-Muong and Nyah Kur help determine their Mon - Khmer origin due to regular correspondences in their basic registers, e.g:

a) 18 words denoting natural phenomena.
Example: N: *ngkaáj* "sky", V: *trời/ngày*; N: *khəjaál* "wind", V: *gió*, A: *kəjɔ́á*, T: *kjuu¹*; N: *chəméj* "star", V: *sao*, S: *Ma: komij*, Ml: *kumej*; N: *tií?* "earth", V: *đất*, Ml: *A: atăk*, T: *ataak¹*; N: *daák* "water", V: *nước/dác*, A: *daák*, S: *Ma, Ml: dak*, T: *daak¹*; N: *kroónj* "river", V: *sông*; N: *hiáŋ* "soot", V: *bồ hóng*, A: *pohaj*, S: *mòhjóŋ*, Ml: *mòhjóŋ*, e.g.

b) 22 words denoting the parts of human body.
Example: N: *măt* "eye", V: *mắt*, A, S: *măt*, Ma, Ml: *măt*, T: *mat¹*; N: *hmóh* "nose", V: *mũi*, A, S, MA, Ml: *muh*, T: *muyh¹*; N: *chəók* "human hair", V: *tóc*, A: *ut-úk*, S: *súk*, Ma: *usúk*, T: *sok¹*, M: *sak³*; N: *chəjéj* "showing one's teeth", V: *nanh*, S: *kanəj*, Ma: *kanəj*; N: *katuər* "ear", V: *tai*, A: *təaj*, S, Ma, Ml: *saj*, T: *saay¹*, M: *saj²*; N: *kəʔ?* "neck", V: *cổ*, S: *roké*, Ma: *kó*, Ml: *kò?*; N: *chùŋ* "foot", V: *chân*, A, S, Ma: *ciŋ*, Ml: *ciŋ*, T: *ciŋ²*; N: *təklét* "scales", V: *da/lốt*, A: *aruót*, S: *korót*, Ma: *karót*, Ml: *kaʔót*; N: *ʔic* "excrement", V: *cứt*, A, Ma, S, Ml: *kik*, e.g.

c) 10 words denoting social relations.
Example: N: *jàh* "person", V: *người*, Ma: *ʔmja*; N: *míə?* "mother", V: *mẹ*, Ma: *mié*, S: *miə*, A: *muó*, Ml: *mí*, T: *məə⁴*; N: *phaə?* "father", V: *bố/bọ*, A: *p¹eá*, Ma: *pó*, S: *bọ*, Ml: *bọ/pó*; N: *ɲcií?* "younger sibling", V: *em*, S: *ciə*, Ma: *ciə*, Ml: *ciə*; N: *cáw* "grandchild of oneself or spouse", V: *cháu*, A: *cáw*, S, Ma: *cú*, Ml: *cáw*; N: *kuán* "one's child", V: *con*, A: *kən*, S, Ma: *kən*, T: *kəən¹*, e.g.

d) 17 words denoting time and numerals.

Example: N: **təŋáj** "sky, heaven", V: **ngà/ngay**, Ml: **ŋǎj**; N: **patám** "nighttime", V: **dēm**, A, S, Ma, Ml: **lám**; N: **mлуù?** "late afternoon", V: **trua**, A: **cilia**, S: **tua**, Ma: **kluo**; N: **hnaám** "year", V: **năm**, S, Ma, R, Ml: **năm**; N: **muəj** "one", V: **một**, A, Ma, S, Ml: **m̄uc**; N: **baər** "two", V: **hai**, A: **hɛal**, S, Ma: **hal**, Ml: **hǎj**; N: **pií?** "three", V: **ba**, A: **pɛa**, Ma, M, Ml: **pa**, T: **paa**, R: **pa**; N: **tráw** "six", V: **sáu**, A: **poráw**, S: **sǎw**, Ma: **plǎw/psǎw**, Ml: **poŋǎw**, R: **rǎw**; N: **mpóh** "seven", V: **bảy**, A: **pó**, S: **pǎj**, Ma, Ml: **pǎj**; N: **ŋcaám** "eight", V: **tám**, A: **thám**, S, Ma, Ml: **thám**, e.g.

e) 28 words denoting domestic animals. Example: N: **kaá?** "fish", V: **cá**, A: **akeá**, S: **ká**, Ma, Ml: **aká**; N: **ciəm** "bird", V: **chim**, A: **icim**, S: **cim**, Ma: **icim**, T: **ciim**¹; N: **cáj** "louse", V: **cháy/chí**, A, Ma, S: **cí**, Ml: **cǎj**; N: **ciɛŋ** "elephant", V: **voi**, A: **acien**, S: **ciəŋ**, Ma: **acien**; N: **ntám** "crab", V: **cua/ram/dam**, A: **kotom**, S, Ma: **katom**, Ml: **rim/ɣim**; N: **ndoók** "mygale", V: **diá**, A: **katá**, S: **tá**, Ma: **tatǎ**, Ml: **rmtá**, T: **tɛh**, M: **diə**⁴; N: **chúr** "dog", V: **chó**, A: **acɔá**, S: **có**, Ml: **có**, Ma: **acó**, R: **acó**, T: **cɔɔ**³; N: **təbún** "stag", V: **mang**, S: **kabaŋ**, Ma: **tabaŋ**, e.g.

f) 13 words denoting staple goods. Example: N: **ŋ rii?** "pertle", V: **chày**, A: **ʔnri**, S: **kori**, Ma: **ʔnri**, Ml: **ʔnre**; N: **hnaá?** /**hǎá?** "cross - bow", V: **ná/nó**; A: **neé**, S, Ma: **ná**, Ml: **nó**; N: **búun-mraà?** "knife and machete", V: **(dao)rɣa/ra**, S: **porá/para**, Ma: **mrá**, Ml: **mɣá**; N: **choók** "rope", V: **thùng/chạc**, S: **cək**, Ma: **cək**; N: **ʔuəj** "firewood", V: **củ**, T: **kuyh**¹, A: **ku?**, S, Ma: **kúlh**, Ml: **kuh** e.g.

g) 14 words denoting familiar plants. Example: N: **chroó?** "ear of rice having no grain", V: **lúa/ló**, A: **alɔá**, S: **lɔ**, Ma: **alɔ**; Ml: **ulɔ**; N: **ŋkɔ** "husked rice", V: **gao**, A: **ʔŋkɔ**, S: **rokó**, Ma: **rukó**, Ml: **ʔŋkáv**; N: **ɣláh** "gold leaves", V: **lá**, A: **olɛé**, S: **lá**, Ma: **ulá**, M: **la**³; N: **rih** "root", V: **rɛ**, A: **rié**, Ma: **riél**, T: **hɛh**¹; N: **mphùəl** "cotton or kapok filere", V: **hoa/bông**, S: **pual**, Ma, Ml: **piəl/piəl**³; N: **chók** "raice straw or threshed rice stalks", V: **rom/toóc**, A: **thák**, S, Ma, Ml: **sók**; N: **tabáŋ** "bamboo shoot", V: **mǎng**, A: **abǎŋ**, Ma: **kabǎŋ**,

Ml: tabăŋ, e.g.

h) 17 words denoting characteristics and properties. Example: N: lăchùh "deep", V: sâu, Ml: cǐu; N: kriiŋ "hard", V: cứng/rắn, Ma: kasăn; N: chăŋwǎj "slightly", V: thối hoắc, A: uók, S, Ma: pu?ók; N: pəcáh "sour", V: chua, S: cuò/cuo, Ma, R: uco, Ml: cuó; N: lỏ? "long time", V: lâu, A: ulǎ, S: lo, Ml: ulo, T: aloo¹; N: ɣkráw "behind", Ml: kósú/ksăw; N: takát-ɣkát "cold", V: rét/ngắt, Ml: knát, Ma: takét; N: mò? "what", V: mô/cái gì, A: umú, S: mó/camó, Ma: camó e.g.

i) 8 words denoting action. Example: N: nthùm "clf. for bundles wrapped in cloth", V: gói/túm, A: utúm; N: ɣkiǎm "uncooked rice", V: cǎm; N: pəmǎ? "dream", V: mǎ/mó, M, S: me; N: wer-wer "flapping the wings", V: bay, S, A, Ml: pǎl, e.g.

2.1. As we know, in Vietnamese there are compounds in which one of the two morphemes is considered meaningless, e.g. in "cổ nhả" meaning "generable speaking", the first morpheme "cổ" can be used independently, whereas "nhả" is a bound morpheme. Compared with its correspondence in Tay, "nhả" is known as a morpheme having Tay-Thai origin with the meaning of "cổ". Thus, "cổ nhả" in Vietnamese virtually means "cổ + cổ"

Comparing Vietnamese with Nyah Kur, we have found a number of correspondences enabling us to determine the meaningless morphemes in the words of "cổ nhả" type: This also means that formerly, these words used to be Mon-Khmer ones. Example: V: nǎ năn, N: pənúl "debt"; V: rét ngắt, N: takát-ɣkát; V: cứng rắn, N: kriiŋ; V: lặng ngắt, N: chəŋát "quiet" A: cǐǎt; V: ấm cúng, N: rə?uǎj "warm"

2.2. On the other hand, in Vietnamese there are true Vietnamese words which have no correspondences in the others of the Viet-Muong group. Comparing these with those in Nyah Kur, we find out immediately that **they are genuine Mon-Khmer words** preserved by Vietnamese much better than the others in the Viet-Muong group. The following words can be considered to belong