THE VIETO-KATUIC HYPOTHESIS: LEXICAL EVIDENCE

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1. Introduction

The position of linguistic affiliation of Vietnamese within Austroasiatic has been proven satisfactorily to most researchers.[1] Lexical evidence (Huffman 1977, Nguyễn T.G. 1978) and phonological data (Haudricourt 1954, Ferlus 1976 and 1981, Diffloth 1989, Nguyễn T.C. 1995) have, using standard historical linguistic reconstructive methodology, solidly demonstrated a genetic linguistic connection between Vietnamese and the Mon-Khmer branch of Austroasiatic.

It is in particular the evidence seen in more conservative varieties of Vietic, including the Minor Vietic/Pọng-Chứt languages,[2] varieties of Mường, and even North Central Vietnamese (Nguyen T.C. 1995, Alves (forthcoming)), that links the heavily sinified speech of traditional northern Vietnamese with Mon-Khmer. In addition, scholars have begun to suggest in print the close link between Vietic and Katuic in particular (Diffloth 1989, 1990, and 2004), and indeed, a proto-Vieto-Katuic grouping has been posited (Diffloth 1990), Nguyễn T.C. (1995)). On the place of Vietnamese within Mon-Khmer, Diffloth (ibid.: 126) wrote the following.

> "Haudricourt was elusive on the matter. But Ferlus (1991) suggested "de solides affinities" between Katuic, Bahnaric, and Việt-Mường without providing any evidence. He was presumably thinking about the lexicon, and I would share that impression, especially with regards to Vietic and Katuic."

The focus of this paper is precisely the lexical evidence (see Sections 4 and 5) that links the Vietic and Katuic branches of Mon-Khmer, with the resulting discovery of possible additional etymological layers between Austroasiatic and Vietic. The supporting lexical data is discussed in more detail below. First, however, in Sections 2 and 3, the data sources and technique for analysis are discussed and a few of the phonological correspondences on which those lexical forms rely for confirmation are summarized.

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[1] However, various researchers have different views on the matter, suggesting origins in a kind of Austro-Thai grouping and including Japanese (Matsumoto 1928 and Nguyễn N.B. 1994), a minor Mon-Khmer substratum with Tai as the main source of the lexical and structural elements of Vietnamese (Maspero 1912, and Hoàng T.C., personal communication), or a language without precise genetic linguistic affiliation (which appears to be the official stance in Vietnam since lists of ethnic groups grouped by linguistic families, but Vietnamese is listed on its own, separate from other Mon-Khmer languages).

[2] There is no current standard usage to refer to the group of Vietic languages outside of the Việt-Mường subbranch. Alves (2003), in a SEALS VII presentation in 1997, used the term 'Minor Vietic', while Nguyễn T.C. (1995) uses the term 'Pọng-Chứt'. The latter term is useful since it is used to distinguish that group for historical grouping and still captures roughly the geographic division.

2. Data and Analysis

The data for this study consist of about 280 fairly solid cognates within Austroasiatic or some sub-branch therein. Of these 280, about 40 are categorized as strong candidates for Vieto-Katuic cognates (with a few dozen more of less certain status). These 40 forms show common phonological patterns of changes and innovations and are generally restricted to Vietic and Katuic (with some minor exceptions in neighboring languages and possible loanwords), as discussed below.

The lexical sources included (a) dictionaries and glossaries, (b) comparative wordlists, and (c) historical linguistic studies (Austroasiatic (Pinnow 1965, Diffloth 1989, Pejros 1998), Mon (Luce 1965), Mon-Khmer (Thomas 1966, Thomas and Headley Jr. 1970, Gregerson and Thomas 1974, Huffman 1977, Ferlus 1978, Diffloth 1990), Pacoh (Nguyễn V.L., Đoàn, and Phan 1984), Palaung-Wa (Luce 1965), Proto-Bahnaric (Sidwell 1998), Proto-Katuic (Pejros 1996, Sidwell 2005), Ruc (Nguyen P.P., Tran, and Ferlus 1988, Nguyễn T.C. 1993), Sengoi (Means 1986), Tai-Kadai (Center for Research in Computational Linguistics), Thavung (Ferlus 1974, Suwilai 1998 and 1999), Vietic (Ferlus 1981, Hayes 1992, Nguyễn T.C. 1995)).

The lexical data were analyzed, and etymological layers based on proto-levels were identified, including (a) Austroasiatic, (b) Mon-Khmer, and (c) possible subgroups within Mon-Khmer (Southern, Northern, and Eastern). Triangulation of the appearance of words (i.e., three sub-branches or three languages within a sub-branch) was considered the minimum to classify lexemes as solid cognates. Without triangulation, the forms were not considered viable candidates until such time that other data are discovered. Within Vietic, the languages Vietnamese, Ruc, and Thavung were the primary sources. These were compared with a Proto-Katuic reconstruction (Sidwell Ibid.), but in some cases, words that were not reconstructed by Sidwell but which at least three Katuic languages had potential cognates were considered viable. In general, the point was to provide a relatively conservative method of excluding data.

A few dozen other items were either excluded or treated differently due to confounding factors. These included words that appear onomatopoetic (e.g., 'cut', 'hit', and 'sip/suck') or those that could be loans from Tai-Kadai or Sinitic (Pou and Jenner 1973 was the primary reference) and words seen among language families in Southeast Asia (such as 'this' and 'eye') are also excluded or kept on the list as weaker evidence. Such words are kept but not used in strong statements about genetic linguistic affiliation.

Another complication is that certain posited Vieto-Katuic forms could be borrowings or look-alikes. However, with more than forty forms, it is assumed here retention is the most likely explanation in the majority of those situations. In the end, while certain posited forms may turn out not to be proto-Vieto-Katuic cognates, and in fact, a proto-Vieto-Katuic phonological system has yet to be generated, the connection between Vietic and Katuic still seems a reasonable hypothesis for the time being.

The data also suggest two other possible subgroups: (a) a larger Northern and Eastern group and (b) a Bahnaro-Vieto-Katuic (BVKa) subgroup within Eastern Mon-Khmer. If the data are proven viable, the BVKa group would appear to some kind of non-Monic and non-Khmeric group that developed in the modern region of Northeast Thailand, Southern Laos and Central Vietnam. Certainly, this hypothesis would require additional support from phonological reconstructions as well as some idea of the contact situation.

3. Phonological Support

The phonological evidence for a Vieto-Katuic subgroup within Eastern Mon-Khmer includes five main points. There is a combination of evidence seen among consonants, phonation, and syllable structure. For each aspect, specific lexical items are taken from the dataset table in the next section, and the numbers of the lexical items refer to their location in the table. The five issues are as follows.

    a) Proto-Mon-Khmer */ʔ/ realized as Proto-Vieto-Katuic */s/ and */h/ (Diffloth 1990) (e.g., #2 'blood' and #3 'bone')

    b) The preservation of Proto-Mon-Khmer */c/ in both Vietic and Katuic (in contrast with the innovative Proto-Bahnaric and Northern Khmer */s/) (reinterpretation of data presented in Ferlus 1978)[3] (e.g., #1 'bird', #19 'dog', and #43 'ripe')

    c) Creaky voice in Katuic and in Vietic with open syllables having sắc/nặng tones (Diffloth 1989) (e.g., #9 'one', #22 'four', and #35 'bitter')

    d) Adding presyllables to proto-Mon-Khmer forms (Nguyễn T.C. 1995) (e.g., #5 'fish', #24 'hair', and #25 'leaf')

4. Etymological Layers

The following pages in Section 5 contain 100 sample words from the various posited etymological levels from Austroasiatic to Vieto-Katuic.[4] The layers and the number of the lexical items in the following chart are shown below.

    (a) AA = Austroasiatic (#1-13)
    (b) MK = Mon-Khmer (#14-33)
    (c) NEMK = Northern and Eastern Mon-Khmer (#34-46)
    (d) EMK = Eastern Mon-Khmer (#47-59)
    (e) BVKa = Bahnaro-Vieto-Katuic (#60-68)
    (f) VKa = Vieto-Katuic (#69-100)

Supplementary support for the division of etymological layers comes from examples of semantic specialization. Higher level items in these examples are generic terms, whereas the subbranches have additional semantically specialized terms.

    1. Mon-Khmer 'tooth' in #31, Eastern Mon-Khmer 'canine teeth' in #59, and Bahnaro-Vieto-Katuic 'gums' in #61
    2. Austroasiatic 'arm/hand' in #7 and Vieto-Katuic 'armpit' in #69.
    3. Austroasiatic 'fly (insect)' in #6 and Vieto-Katuic 'bluebottle fly' in #81.
    4. Austroasiatic 'bird' in #1, Northeastern Mon-Khmer 'crow' in #18, and Vieto-Katuic 'duck' and #77.

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[3] Ferlus, who attempted to show how Vietnamese phonemes patterned with Northern Mon-Khmer, in fact provided reasonable evidence for Vieto-Katuic, in particular, the shared Proto-Mon-Khmer palatal stop */c/ in both Vietic and Katuic, in contrast with the Bahnaric innovation */s/.

[4] A complete with over 300 forms (including forms of less certain status) list is available at www.geocities.com/malves98. In addition, the complete table includes data from the Vietic Language Thavung and Proto-Bahnaric.

5. Dataset

The table below contains (1) the English gloss, (2) the etymological source level, (3) the Vietnamese form, (4) the form from the highly conservative Vietic language, Ruc, and (5) the proto-Katuic form (from Sidwell Ibid.) or forms from multiple Katuic languages when no reconstruction exists. The Ruc forms come from two sources, which are separated by a backslash. Multiple forms from the same source are separated by commas. Double 'x' indicates that the form was not found in available sources. Under the column with proto-Katuic, (P) stands for Pacoh, (T) for Taoih, and (B) for Bru. These are forms that have no proto-Katuic reconstruction, but for which there is still support within the language group.

	Gloss	Level	Viet	Ruc	Proto-Kat.
1.	bird	AA	cim^1	ʔi.ciːm^1	*ceem
2.	blood	AA	maw^3	ʔa.sam^3 / ʔa.saːm^3	*ʔahaam
3.	bone	AA	sɨəŋ^1	saŋ^1 / saŋ^2	*ʔŋhaaŋ
4.	ear	AA	taːj^1	saːj^1	*ktoor
5.	fish	AA	ka^3	ʔa.kaː^3	*ʔakaa
6.	fly (v.)	AA	baj^1	pəːr^1 / pəːl^1	*par
7.	hand/arm	AA	taj^1	siː^1 /	*ʔatii
8.	nose	AA	muj^6	mujh^2, mujh^2 / muh^1, mulʃ^1	*moh
9.	one	AA	mot^4	moːc^4	*muoj
10.	rain	AA	mɨə^1	xx	*maa
11.	root	AA	re^6	reah^2 / liɛrh^1	*rias
12.	two	AA	haːj	haːl^1	*ɓaar
13.	water	AA	nɨək^3	daːk^3	*ɗaak~ɗəək
14.	2nd pers. Sing., you	MK	maj^2	ʔa.miː^1, miː^1	*maj
15.	breathe	MK	ŋɨj^5 (smell)	ta.ŋəːh^1	*tŋih
16.	centipede	MK	ret^3	ka.siːp^3 / ka.sit^3	*kaheep
17.	child	MK	kɔn^1	kɔːn^1	*kɔɔn
18.	crow (n.)	MK	ʔaːk^3	xx	*[k/ʔ]aʔaak
19.	dog	MK	cɔ^3	ʔa.cɔː^3	*ʔacɔɔ
20.	fly (n.)	MK	ɾuəj^5	mə.rɔɔj^2, pə.rɔɔj^2 / mu.rɔj^1	*ʔarɔɔj
21.	foot, leg	MK	cən^1	ciːŋ^2	*ʃɨɨŋ
22.	four	MK	bon^3	poːn^3	*puan
23.	fruit	MK	ʈaːj^3	pu.liː^3 / pə.liː^3	*palaj
24.	hair	MK	tauk^3	ʔu.suːk^3	*sok
25.	leaf	MK	la^3	ʔu.laː^3, hlaː^3	*salaa
26.	louse, head	MK	cəj^3	ciː^3	*ʔɲcəj
27.	meat, flesh	MK	tʰit^4	siːt^4	*sac
28.	mosquito	MK	muəj^6	keːp^3	*mɔɔs
29.	new	MK	məj^3	bəj^3 / bəj^3	*tmɛɛ
30.	shoot	MK	ban^3	piɲ^3	*paɲ
31.	tooth	MK	raŋ^1	ka.saŋ^1	xx
32.	weave	MK	daːn^1	taːɲ^1	*taaɲ
33.	weep, cry	MK	xauk^3	ɟaːm^4	*ɲaam~ɲiim
34.	betel leaf	NEMK	ʈəw^2	pluː^2	*balua

35. bitter	NEMK	daŋ^3	taŋ^3 / xx	*ʔataŋ
36. deep	NEMK	ʂəw^1	cə.ru:^{1}, ɟə.ru:^{1}, tru:^{1}, tu:^{1} / xx	*ɟruu[ʔ]
37. far	NEMK	sa^1, ŋa:j^3	cə.ŋa:j^1 / cə.ŋa:j^3	*cŋaaj
38. mortar	NEMK	koj^3	tə.ko:l^3	*tpal
39. pestle	NEMK	caj^2	ʔn.ri?^{1}	*ʔn^{d}ree
40. rat	NEMK	cuət	kə.ne:^{3} / kə.nɛ:^{3}	*knɛɛ
41. rice chaff / husk	NEMK	ka:m^3 (bran)	kɨ.tɨk^3 / ka.tɨk^3	*ʔŋkaam
42. rice, unhusked	NEMK	ɣa:w^4	rə.ko:^{3}	xx
43. ripe, cooked	NEMK	cin^3	chi:n^3	*ceen
44. snake	NEMK	ran^3	pu.si:ɲ^3 / pə.si:ɲ^3	*ksaɲ
45. thatch	NEMK	ʈaɲ^1	ʔm.lɛɲ^1 / mə.lɛ:ŋ^2	*plaŋ
46. thigh	NEMK	duj^2	pu.lu:^{1}	*balaw
47. bark, shell	EMK	vɔ^5	ka.duk^1 / ka.du:h^1	*ʔnɗɔh~ ʔn^{d}rɔh
48. die	EMK	cet^3	kɨ.cit^3 / ku.cit^3, ka.cit^3	*kceet
49. grandchild	EMK	caw^3	cu:^{3}	*ʔacaw
50. hundred	EMK	ʈam^1	klam^1	*kalam
51. inside	EMK?	ʈauŋ^1	klɔŋ^1	*kaluŋ
52. kill	EMK	ziət^3	ka.ci:t^3	*knceet
53. lime (for betel)	EMK	voj^1	ka.pu:r^1, ka.pu:l^1 / xx	*kmboor
54. lose/lost	EMK, non-B	mət	bət^4 / bat^3	*pɨt
55. otter	EMK	ra:j^3 ka^3	pu.se:^{3}	*psaj~*phaj
56. python	EMK	ʈan^1	pu.si:ɲ^1 ləan^4 / pu.si:ɲ^1 lɨan^4	*talan
57. right side	EMK?	fa:j^5, dam^1 (right hand)	təʌm^2 / təam^2	*ʔatɨəm~*ʔatəm
58. squirrel	EMK	ʂawk^3	cɨ.mɔ:k^3 / xx	*prɔɔʔ
59. tooth, canine	EMK	naɲ^1 (canine)	ka.ne:ŋ^1 / ka.nɛ:ŋ^1	*knɛɛŋ (tooth)
60. blow (blowpipe)	BVKa	t^{h}oj^5	t^{h}urh^1, t^{h}ujh^1 / t^{h}u:l^1	xx
61. gums	BVKa	ləj^4	li:ɲ^2, ʔliɲ^2 / xx	*laɲ
62. hang up	BVKa	maok^3	bɔ:k^3 / xx	*tmɓak
63. hatch	BVKa	dɛ^5	ra.ɟo:^{3}	*ceh
64. intestines	BVKa	ruət^4	rooc^4 / ʒuac^4	*rɔɔc
65. leech, forest	BVKa	vat^3	pli:m^1	*pləəm
66. mouth	BVKa	miəŋ^4	ka:ŋ^3 / kaɲ^3	*kaaŋ
67. split (v.)	BVKa	bɛ^5 bɨə^5	xx / pɛ:h^1	*paah
68. weevil	BVKa	mɔt^4	mu:c^3 / mooc^4	*krmɔɔt
69. armpit	VKa, EMK?	nac	lɨ.βa:k^3 / lɨ.va:k^3	lmpaak (shoulder)
70. basket, winnowing	VKa	nouŋ^1	ta.dɔŋ^1 / ta.do:ŋ^1	*kɗoŋ
71. beak	VKa	mɔ^5	təm.bɔ:c^3	*crɓɔh
72. beat	VKa	daŋ^3	pɨp^3, tɛɲ^3 / taɲ^3	*diɲ

73.	branch	VKa	kaɲ², ɲaɲ³	ta.kɛːŋ³	* ʔŋkɛɛŋ
74.	brother	VKa	ʔaɲ¹	məaŋ⁴ / məan¹, moan¹	*ʔamiiŋ
75.	cage	VKa	louŋ⁵, cuəŋ²	kluŋ¹	*taruŋ
76.	crow (v.)	VKa	ɣaj³	tə.kal³, tɨ.kar¹	*tkar
77.	duck	VKa	vit⁴	βiːt⁴ / viːt⁴	*ʔadaa
78.	fall, drop	VKa	do⁵	tuh¹ / toːh¹	*sdoh
79.	fireplace	VKa	bep³	ta.pɛh¹ / ta.peh¹	*tpɛh
80.	flood	VKa	lut⁴, lu⁶	bluːt⁴ / luːt⁴	*luut
81.	fly, blue-bottle	VKa	ɲaŋ⁴	ʔm.laŋ¹ / mə.laŋ¹	(P) li.laːŋ
82.	frog	VKa	ʔec³	ʔa.kuət⁴ / kuak²	*ʔaguut
83.	heavy	VKa	naŋ⁴	naŋ⁴, ʔnaŋ⁴ / naŋ³	*ʔntaŋ
84.	insipid, tasteless	VKa	ɲaːt⁴	ʔɨ.taːh¹ / ʔu.taːh¹	*ʔatɨah
85.	louse, body	VKa	rən⁴	xx / briːɲ³	*ʔnᵈrəɲ
86.	melt, drip	VKa	rɔ⁵, ɲɔ⁵	tɨ.ɟɔːh¹ / xx	*ʃoh
87.	nest	VKa	to⁵	xx / ʔoː⁴, toː⁴	*sooh
88.	open (something)	VKa	mə⁵	bəː⁴	*pəəh
89.	peel, skin	VKa	lot⁴	xx / luɔʔ⁴	*lok
90.	remember	VKa	ɲəː³	xx	(P) ʔa.jɨː, (B) sa.jɨː, sa.ɲɨː
91.	remove skin	VKa	lot⁴	xx / luɔʔ⁴	*luat
92.	rice, sticky	VKa	nep³	deːp³	*ɗeep
93.	rumor, ask	VKa, BVKa?	haːn¹ ('ask' in redupl.)	haːɲ¹ / xx	*haaɲ
94.	seed, grain	VKa	haːt⁴	ʔok³ / ka.ɟaŋ³, kaʔ.ɟaŋ³	*kalɔɔŋ
95.	shine, bright	VKa	ʂaːŋ³	ʔu.βaŋ³ / lə.vaːŋ³	*ɓraaŋ
96.	shoulder	VKa VKa	vaːj¹	ka.laːŋ² / ka.laːŋ¹	*crlaaŋ, *ʔapaal
97.	small, little	VKa, BVKa?	ʔit³	ʔiːt³	*kɛ[ɛ]t
98.	termite	VKa, B?	moj³	ku.rəan⁴ / ku.muːl⁴	*kmuar
99.	thunder	VKa, BVKa?	ʂəm³	krɨːm⁴	*grɨm
100.	tongue	VKa	lɨəj⁶	ləajh², ləajh² / ləajh¹	*lsas~*lɨas (to lick)

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