

Introduction

Sakom is a Thai dialect spoken in certain villages in Tambon Sakom, Amphoe Chana and Amphoe Thepha, Songkhla province. Geographically, Sakom is surrounded by Songkhla dialect and is separated from Tak Bai in the further south (see Map 1), but it is believed to be a hybrid of Songkhla and Tak Bai dialects. (Chalerm Marknuan, 1983; Wichit Srisuwitthanon, 1980, 1985) In this paper the genetic relationship of these three dialects will be addressed: to which dialect Sakom is closely related?

Most linguists consider Tak Bai and Songkhla two separate dialects. In Brown (1965), Tak Bai is distinct from Southern Thai (Songkhla included) although both are derived from the same parent language, Sukhothai. In his review of Brown (1965), Gedney considers that Tak Bai shares the same two-way tonal split with Shan, Phu Tai (at Sakon Nakhon and Wanonniwat), the Lao dialect of Vientiane, the North Eastern Thai dialects of Lom Sak and Khon Sawan, and the Yo dialect (at Sakon Nakhon) whereas Southern Thai shows a three-way tonal split. Chailert Kitprasert (1985), and Puttachart Potibal and Thananan Trongdee (1997) also differentiate Tak Bai from Southern Thai, with respect to tonal split and merger. Moreover, in their comparative study, Puttachart and Thananan (1998) conclude that genetically Tak Bai is closely related to Phu Tai than to Southern Thai.

Research Methodology

The methodology used in this study was that of descriptive and comparative linguistics. The data on Sakom was collected from Ban Sakom, Amphoe Chana, Songkhla. A wordlist of 1,600 entries was used to elicit data from one main informant. Sakom's phonological system was analyzed and described. Linguistic data on Tak Bai and Songkhla dialects were drawn from several sources. A comparative study of these three dialects was then carried out.

In comparing Sakom, Tak Bai and Songkhla, four criteria are used to establish their genetic relationship: tonal split, tonal coalescence, vowel lengthening, and certain lexical entries.

Sakom Phonological Inventory

Consonant Phonemes : There are 23 initial consonants, 11 consonants clusters: /pl - pr- phl- phr - tr - kl - kw - khl - khr - khw - /, and 9 final consonants : /- p -t -k -ʔ -m -n -ŋ -w -j/ The phonetic consonant chart is as follows:


Stop					
voiceless unaspirated	p	t	c	h	ʔ
voiceless aspirated	ph	th	ch	kh	
voiced	b	d		g	
Nasals	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
Fricatives	f	s			h
Semivowels	w		j		
Roll		r			
Lateral		l			

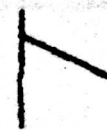
Vowel Phonemes : There are 18 monophthongs : 9 short vowel and 9 long vowels, and 3 diphthongs : ia ua ua . The phonemic vowel chart is as follows:

	Front		Central		Back	
High	i	i:	ɨ	ɨ:	u	u:
Mid	e	e:	ʌ	ʌ:	o	o:
Low	ɛ	ɛ:	a	a:	ɔ	ɔ:


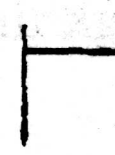
Tonemes : The tone system is demonstrated in Gedney's Tone Boxes as follows:

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1					
2	/1/		/4/	/6/	/4/
3					
4	/2/	/3/	/5/		/3/


/1/ = 

/2/ = 

/3/ =  , 

/4/ =  , 

/5/ =  , 

/6/ = 

Linguistic Criteria Used in this Study

1. Tonal Split

Modern Tai dialects may exhibit a two-way split (bipartition) of the three Proto-Tai tones *A *B *C, depending on the original voiced/voiceless consonant distinction; or they may exhibit a three-way tonal split (tripartition) according to the classes of initial consonants: High, Mid, and Low (the three classes of Siamese initial consonants as defined in the writing system).

2. Tonal Coalescence

The B-DL coalescence: B=DL is found among the Tak Bai dialects (Brown, 1965; Chailert, 1985; Puttachart and Thananan, 1997, 1998; Wichit, 1980, 1985) and the A-B coalescence (A=B) is the characteristic of Songkhla and other Southern Thai dialects. (Chamberlain, 1975)

3. Vowel Lengthening

Puttachart and Thananan (1998) observe that lengthening of high vowels in closed syllables appears plentiful in Tak Bai and such lengthening could be used as a classification criteria.

4. Certain Lexicon

Wichit (1985) finds that a large number of lexical items are found specially among the Tak Bai (sub)dialects, but are absent from Southern Thai. Praphaphan Seneetantikul (1985) gives a list of lexical items found only in Songkhla, but not in other Southern Thai. These two lists of vocabularies will be compared with that of Sakom to see how many of them are shared.

The Relationship Between Sakom, Tak Bai and Songkhla Dialects

The comparative data on Sakom, Tak Bai and Songkhla are as follows:

1. Tonal Split

With respect to the pattern of tonal split, Sakom shares a two-way split type with Tak Bai; that is, *A *B *C *D > ABCD 123-4. In contrast, the tonal system of Songkhla shows a three-way split type. See diagram 1 below.

Diagram 1: Tonal split and coalescence of Sakom, Tak Bai, and Songkhla

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	/1/		/4/	/6/	/4/
2					
3					
4	/2/	/3/	/5/		/3/

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	/1/	/3/	/5/	/1/	/3/
2					
3					
4	/2/	/4/	/6/		/2/

Sakom

Tak Bai (Ban Pawai, Narathiwat;
Puttachart and Thananan, 1998)

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	/1/		/5/	/1/	/5/
2	/2/		/6/	/2/	/6/
3	/3/		/7/	/4/	/4/
4					

Songkhla (modified: vichin, 1996;
Suphap, 1985)

2. Tonal Coalescence

Sakom exhibits an A=B merger more or less like that in Songkhla; that is, A123= B123 in Sakom and A1=B1, A23=B23 in Songkhla. Like Songkhla, Sakom also has a B≠DL pattern. In contrast, Tak Bai shows a B=DL characteristic as in diagram 1.

It is interesting to note that two subdialects of Tak Bai, Muang Yon and Phi Then, also exhibit an A=B coalescence and a B≠DL pattern, although with different degrees of similarity. (see diagram 2)

Diagram 2: Tonal split and coalescence of Muang Yon and Phi Then.

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	/1/		/4/	/1/	/6/
2					
3					
4	/2/	/3/	/5/	/2/	/3/

Tak Bai (Muang Yon, Narathiwat;
Puttachart and Thananan, 1998)

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	/1/		/5/		/3/
2	/2/				
3					
4	/3/	/4/	/6/	/4/	

Tak Bai (Phi Then, Pattani;
Chailert, 1985)

Muang Yon's and Phi Then's tonal systems are believed to have been influenced by Southern Thai (Chailert, 1985; Putthachart and Thananan, 1998) Likewise, with respect to A=B and B≠DL, Sakom may have been influenced by Songkhla, the surrounding dialect.

3. Vowel Lengthening

The following data shows different degrees of lengthening of high vowels in closed syllables in the three dialects under study.

	Sakom	Tak Bai	Songkhla
*i > i:			
'water leech'	plix̌ŋ 1	plix̌ŋ 1	plix̌ŋ 1
'to blow away'	lɔːj 2	plix̌w 1	phat 7
'to grill'	peŋ 4	pix̌ŋ/pix̌ŋ 5	pix̌ŋ 6
'ginger'	khix̌ŋ 1	khix̌ŋ 1	khix̌ŋ 1
'to be full'	ʔe:m 1	ʔix̌m 3	ʔe:m 2

'finger'	niw 5	nirw 6	niw 7
'monkey'	lin 2	lin 2	lin 3
'tongue'	lin 5	lin 6	lin 6
'to warm at the fire'	fin 1	fin 1	fin 1
'pimples'	sirw 1	sirw 3	siw 1
'chisel'	sirw 1	sirw 3	siw 1
'stone'	hin 1	hin 1	hin 1
'to carry by hand'	hiw 4	hirw 5	hiw 5
*ui > ui			
'to steam'	nun 4	nun 5	nun 4
*u > u:			
'to carry in arms'	ʔom 4	ʔum 5	ʔom 6
'uncle'	lun 2/wɔɪʔ 3	lun/lun 2	lun 2

What is of interest is the lengthening in the words khin 1 'ginger' sirw 1 'pimples' sirw 1 'chisel' in Sakom and Tak Bai. This similarity cannot be attributed to language contact since Sakom is surrounded by speakers of Songkhla and is cut off from Tak Bai in the far south. What is left possible then is that both Sakom and Tak Bai inherited these words from the same parent.

4. Certain Lexicon

The following table shows that Sakom shares a higher percentage of lexicon with Tak Bai than with Songkhla.

Type of lexicon	Lexicon shared by Sakom & Tak Bai	Lexicon shared by Sakom & Songkhla	Lexicon found only in Sakom	Lexicon shared by Sakom, Standard Thai & general Southern Thai	Loans from Malay and Khmer	Total
Number of words	69	39	26	67	9	210
%	32.8	18.5	12.3	31.9	4.28	100

Conclusion

The study reveals that:

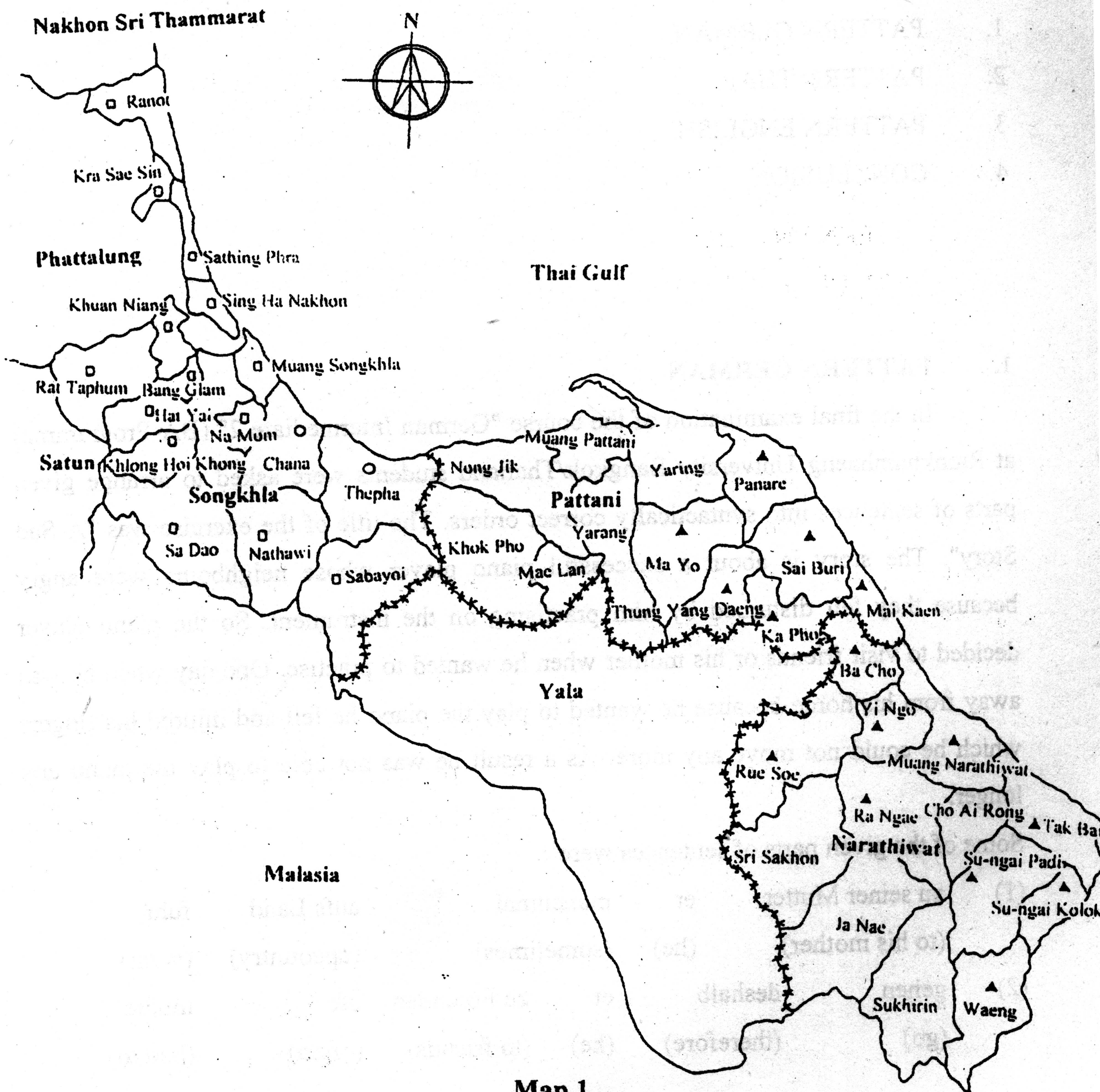
1. With respect to tonal split, Sakom exhibits a 'two-way split', similar to Tak Bai.
2. With respect to tonal coalescence, Sakom exhibits an A=B merger and a B≠DL pattern, similar to Songkhla.
3. With respect to lengthening of high vowels in closed syllables, Sakom behaves in the same way as Tak Bai and Songkhla, but is more like Tak Bai than Songkhla.
4. Sakom shares a larger number of lexical items with Tak Bai than with Songkhla.

Taking these 4 criteria into consideration, it is concluded that genetically Sakom is closely related to Tak Bai than Songkhla.

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- Sakom dialect area
- ▲ Tak Bai dialect area
- Songkhla dialect area



Map 1