Four Languages of the Vietnam-China Borderlands

Jerold A. Edmondson and Kenneth J. Gregerson
University of Texas at Arlington

1. The Vietnam connection. The peopling of SE Asia has displayed several long-term and persistent trends.\(^1\) One of the most obvious of these has been the migration of language groups from southern China into Mainland SE Asia. This fact is undisputed. Uncertainty remains, however, as to questions of linguistic affiliation at greater time depth and as to the sources and routes of these migrations, cf. Edmondson and Li 1996. In pursuit of answers to such questions large and small languages throughout SE Asia have been discussed in the literature, e.g., Benedict 1975, Hudak 1991, 1995. The majority and minority groups in Thailand, for instance, have been investigated linguistically in great depth for several decades and much new material about the ethnicities within southern China is exemplified in earlier research by Li Fang Kuei and subsequently by other scholars in China, notably works appearing in the journal 民族语文 Minzu Yuwen [Minority Languages and Literatures]. What still remain obscure, however, are details on the linguistic groups that lie across borders whose antecedants are still to be found in southern China. A notable chapter in this regard is what one might call the Vietnam Connection, an area to which the current paper aims to make a modest contribution.

There is great overlap between the minority groups of Yunnan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Sichuan Provinces and the stocks of northern Vietnam. Some are clearly recent immigrants; others may be autochthonous peoples of the borderlands areas. So for example, in the Chinese translation of Các dân tộc ít người ở Việt Nam (các tỉnh phía bắc) 1978 it is noted that of the thirty-six languages of the northern-most part of Vietnam, fully 23 of them are also found in China often today living in locations at great distances from one another. One way that linguists
can contribute to an understanding of such borderlands groups is to explore migratory patterns using dialectological similarity between linguistic strains in Vietnam and their brethren in China. The present paper will treat of only four groups who have apparently come to Vietnam in relatively recent times: (1) the Kam; (2) the Sui; (3) the Pa-hng; and (4) the Giây.²

2. Kam. Kam is a Kam-Sui language in the Kadai Branch whose speakers are primarily found in Guizhou Province, China. They are thought to have come to Vietnam in small numbers about 150 years ago and are found today in one village, Đồng Mốc, of Tuyên Quang Province. It has been general unknown to non-Vietnamese scholars until recently that Kam is spoken outside of China and few if any purely linguistic publications exist on the Kam of Vietnam. However, brief ethnographic notes and a short word list are found in Nguyễn Khắc Tùng (1975:306-16) and there is a brief description of the cultural practices of the Kam in Các dân tộc ít người ở Việt Nam (các tỉnh phía bắc) (1975:287-90).

Local authorities helped us to find what we believe to be the best speaker of Kam in Vietnam, Mr. Thạch Kim Đồng or in Chinese Shi Jindong 石金侗.³ Mr. Đồng learned the language from his mother, the now 96 year old Ngô Thị Thang (with family name Wu 吴), who had also taught him much about Kam culture and history. He has reported to us that in his village there are about 35 people who would claim to be Kam. Among them, though, only the family of the matriarch Ngô Thị Thang can still speak the language and Mr. Đồng is said to speak the best, now that his mother has grown deaf in her old age.

2.1. Tones of Viet Kam. Kam is one of the languages of Asia that has carried the process of tone splitting to an extensive degree. Mr. Đồng speaks a kind of Kam that has not split its tones as fully as most kinds.
It is the usual assumption that the Kam-Sui languages, like the Tai languages in general, had five proto tones, now conventionally designed A, B, C, DL, and DS, cf. Li 1965, 1977. From the five tones then arose ten by a sound change known as tone bipartition, as it has been called in Haudricourt 1961. It was usually the case that forms with original voiced consonant initials developed low tones, whereas those with original voiceless consonant initials developed high tones, cf. Liang Min 1984, Wang 1984, and Edmondson and Yang 1988. We can represent these changes as in Figure 1:

![Figure 1](image_url)  
Figure 1  Tonal bipartition into HIGH and LOW reflexes

![Figure 2](image_url)  
Figure 2: Tripartition into HIGH, LOW, RISING tones
Kam, however, belongs to a select group of area languages that have undergone *triptartition* through a second historically distinct tonal bipartition whenever the original consonant initials possessed aspiration (voiceless friction, as it is called by Gedney 1972). Rising tones were the result. The process is illustrated in Figure 2.

The above scenario eventually led to nine tones in open syllables and six in closed syllables. The tripartition of tones is attested in four of the six generally recognized varieties of Kam with bipartition in the other two, the latter being found in extreme southeast Guizhou at Liping Shuikou (designated area 5 in the unpublished but comprehensive dialectological report Dongyu Diaocha Baogao 1957) and in Rongshui County of Guangxi Province, area 6, on the very southern edge of Kam speaking territory.

We found that Viet Kam clearly reflects at least six tones, which would constitute bipartition. However to complicate the picture, some tendencies were also observed possibly reflecting additional developing tones in Mr. Đỗng’s speech. Specifically, those vocabulary items with aspirated stop or voiceless friction initials typically had a higher onset than vocabulary with plain voiceless stop initials. While this effect may be only phonetic and not a contrastive feature of the language, it may reflect "work in progress" of a familiar tonal sort in this linguistic area, i.e. emerging tripartition.

The organization of Viet Kam tones as developments from proto categories may be represented as in Figure 3:

<table>
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<th>A</th>
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<th>C</th>
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<th>DL</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>[32]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Viet Kam tone categories
We have constructed plots of representative forms with these tones from our tape recordings.\footnote{6}

**Viet Kam Tone A**

![Graph of Viet Kam Tone A](image)

*pa44 fish*

*to212 animal classifier*

Figure 4: Viet Kam Tone A (\(>\) tone 1 and tone 2) illustrated in *pa*\(^1\) ‘fish’ and *to*\(^2\) ‘animal classifier’

**Viet Kam Tone B**

![Graph of Viet Kam Tone B](image)

*kai53 chicken*

*yaan33 goose*

Figure 5: Viet Kam Tone B (\(>\) tone 5 and tone 6) illustrated in *kai*\(^5\) ‘chicken’ and *yaan*\(^6\) ‘goose’
Figure 6: Viet Kam Tone C (> tone 3 and tone 4) illustrated in paai³ ‘aunt’ and sa⁴ ‘grandmother’.

Figure 7: Viet Kam tone DS (> tone 7 and tone 8) illustrated in sak⁷ ‘wash clothes’ and nok⁸ ‘bird’ as well as tone DL (> tone 9 and tone 10) illustrated in laak⁹ ‘bone’ and laak¹⁰ ‘child’.
Thus, tone 1 is a 44 mid-high level, about 39 semitones (st), while tone 2 is a 212 with a low “dishing” in the middle to about 34 semitones. Tone 5 in the above is a 53 falling tone (from 42-36 semitones) while tone 6 is a 33 mid-level tone (in the range of 36-37 semitones). Tone 3 is a 24 rising tone (from 39-46 semitones) and tone 4 is a 52 falling tone (from 41-33 semitones). In Figure 7 tone 7 possesses a very high and short 55 pitch trajectory at the 44 semitone level. In the case of Tone 8 (32) the initial voiced nasal causes the onset to begin at a depressed level of about 36 semitones whereas the vocalic part of the syllable begins at the peak of the trajectory and falls from 37 st to 35 st. The two long closed syllable tones, tone 9 (34) and tone 10 (31) also begin with voiced sonorants, namely l-, and thus the vocalic part of the syllable starts at a point about halfway through the course of the syllable (200ms). Tone 9 rises from 36 st to 41 st, while Tone 10 falls from a high of 36 st to 34 st.

The six tone system of open syllables in Viet Kam above compares favorably with the varieties of Kam found in China at Congjiang Guandong, Liping Pingtu, Liping Shuikou, and Congjiang Guandong, cf. Yang (1988:29-30). Viet Kam as well as its counterpart varieties in Kam of Area 5 above has only six tones in open syllables at the same time preserving a richer set of initial consonant than at virtually all other locations.

2.2. Initials in Kam.

Viet Kam initials:

\[\begin{array}{cccccc}
p & t & t' & k & q & ? \\
ph & th & th' & kh \\
s & c & h \\
v & j, l \\
hw & hj, hl \\
m & n & n' & \eta \\
hm & hn & hn \\
\end{array}\]
It is worth noting that the transcriptions $hm$ $hn$ $hl$ etc do not represent /m n ŋ ɳ ɻ/ but rather a cluster in which the h onset is timed to precede the sonorant. The sonorants may retain at least some of their original voicing. Thus, hl might, in finer transcription, be [hl].

2.3. Viet Kam vowels. In Kam all vowels in open syllables are inherently long. In Viet Kam like standard Rongjiang Kam of China there occur the vowels /a aa e ə o i u/, among which only the vowel a (and to some lesser extent the vowels e and o) distinguishes for length. The short a is usually realized as [a] and the long a as [a]. In the case of e and o, short e is often [ə] or [ɛ] and short o is [ɔ]; long e is [e] and long o is [o]. There is, however, a particular distribution for what was historically vowel length in Kam. Only in syllables that end in /p t k m n ŋ i u/ do the vowels /a o e/ show
contrast. Thus, there is a contrast between \textit{mei}^4 ‘tree, wood’ and \textit{nai}^2 ‘this’, the latter now reflecting a back vowel and the former a central vowel. In syllables with codas /p t k/ there are also differences of pitch trajectory, vocabulary with long vowel nuclei generally resemble vocabulary with pitch shapes like tone C and vocabulary with short vowel nuclei generally resemble vocabulary with pitch shapes like tone A. The vowel \textit{o} is often [ɔ] and \textit{e} often [ɛ] in closed syllables especially.

The vowel \textit{i} is unusually far back in the mouth resembling the phonetic value of [ɨ]. This feature becomes especially evident with labial initials; thus there is a clear contrast in vowels between \textit{miŋ}^4 ‘fate, destiny’ and \textit{mjiŋ}^4 ‘cotton’ or \textit{pjìn}^4 ‘rain’ vs. \textit{pɛ}^2 ‘skin’. After palatal and palatalized initials /pj ph mj lj n nh/ the /i/ is fronted to [i].

2.4. Vocabulary. Kam, as a speech form in Vietnam, is today restricted to only a very few individuals and is not being passed on to their children. It is, therefore, a matter of some urgency that we preserve copious examples of the language now for future generations. Clearly, we are not many years away from losing all live speech evidence on this historic Kam migration into the Vietnam-China borderlands. Even so, we were impressed that languages don’t disappear easily and that a speaker, such as Mr. Đông had acquired the lexical richness and phonological complexity of his first language despite growing up in a community possessed of few conversational partners in Kam. In this regard, one expects to see some contraction as a result of the small speech population, especially in the area of vocabulary. Indeed, we found such to be the case. Certain vocabulary items found among the Kam of China, for example, are no longer present. For instance, Mr. Đông uses only the phrase \textit{Nyenc Gaeml [\textit{nen}'kəm']} ‘Kam people’ and does not employ the equally common expression used in China, \textit{Lagx Nyenc Gaeml [\textit{laak}^{10}\textit{nen}'kəm']} ‘Kam people’. On the other hand, he has the archaic word \textit{bui}^2 for ‘cotton’
as well as the more modern Han borrowing \textit{mjiuž}. We did not, however, find the older form \textit{maanž} for 'village' (cf. Sui \textit{baanž}) only \textit{caaiž}.

2.5. Locating the original settlement area of the Viet Kam. In order to locate the possible original home area of the Viet Kam, we tabulated a body of Viet Kam forms as to whether they were identical with parallel items in 22 Kam villages at different locations in China. We ranked these identities of form for all items we checked with the result that some villages overlapped very little and others a great deal. The sites numbered 1-22 in Figure 8 below reflect the degree of similarity. The sites 6 and 9-22 show little similarity to Viet Kam, whereas sites 4, 5, 7, and especially 8 show a very high degree of identical shared forms. We can, therefore, suggest that at this stage of our survey the \textit{Urheimat} of the Viet Kam was perhaps Liping Shuikou of Guizhou Province, China or at least a speech community very much like it.

![Graph showing shared forms in 22 Kam locations.](image)

Figure 8: Shared forms in 22 Kam locations.

3. \textit{The Thuy} or \textit{Sui nationality of Vietnam}. The Thuy or Sui nationality of Vietnam is one of the country's smallest groups. According to the census data of 1982
they numbered only 55 individuals. This fragile population today totals about 100 as indicated by our informant. They are all located in Hòng Quang Village of Chiêm Hoa District, Tuyên Quang Province. This village is situated about 62 km to the NW of Chiêm Hoa City near the border with Hà Giang Province and the last thirty km of the road must be traversed on foot. As the old people of the village tell it, eight families immigrated to Vietnam about 100-200 year ago but exact times remain uncertain. Since their arrival the members of two clans—the Yang clan and the Fan clan—have assimilated to other ethnic identities. Consequently, there exist only six Sui families today, among which Mr. Lý Vấn Ming reckoned the families: Meng, Li, and Pan. The Sui of Hòng Quang Village live with the Pa-hng and the Tày and multilingualism is universal.

In October 1995 we were fortunate enough to be able to work with Mr. Ming, 46, of this community, who provided us with a 600 word vocabulary, some grammatical structures, and information about the current state of the Sui language in Vietnam. He was accompanied by Mr. Phán Văn Đồng, 45 years of age, a member of the Pa-hng nationality (concerning which more below).

3.1. Sui tones. The Viet Sui of Mr. Lý’s speech has six tones in open syllables and four tones in closed syllables. These can be illustrated in our composite plots of the lexical items indicated in the figures below.
Figure 9: Viet Sui Tone A (> tone 1 and tone 2) illustrated in \textit{pai}$\textsuperscript{1}$ ‘go, to’ and \textit{ma}$\textsuperscript{2}$ ‘tongue’

Figure 10: Viet Sui Tone B (> tone 5 and tone 6) illustrated in \textit{qai}$\textsuperscript{5}$ ‘chicken’ and \textit{yaan}$\textsuperscript{6}$ ‘goose’
Figure 11: Viet Sui Tone C (> tone 3 and tone 4) illustrated in *pa*³ ‘aunt’ and *mai*⁴ ‘tree’

Viet Sui Tones DL and DS

Figure 12: Viet Sui Tone DL & DS (> tone 7L, 7S, 8L, and 8S) illustrated in *tap*⁷S ‘liver’, *nok*⁸S ‘bird’, *taap*⁷L ‘carry on a pole’, and *laak*⁸L ‘child’.

Tone 1 has the value (2)12, with values typically 35-34-35 st. Tone 2 is a mid-high to low falling tone (41) with the value 40 st dropping to 34 st. In this example the initial m- provides the lowered locus at onset. The B (open syllable) tones, tone 5 and tone 6 have a profile as follows: Tone 5 is a (falling)-rising ((3)25) tone with value 38-35-43 st and Tone 6 (34) is a mid-high rising tone 37-40 st. The original C tones,
called Tone 3 and 4 have the respective values of 44 (or a mid-high level 39 st) and a high falling tone 53 (42-38 st).

The closed syllable tones have the values: $7S = 55$ (at about the 42 st level); $8S = 42$ (in the range of 39-35 st); $7L = 24$ (35-40 st), and $8L = 31$ (38-34 st), being somewhat longer and ending somewhat lower than $8S$.

In China there are about 300,000 Sui speakers, with about 85% of the population residing equally in Sandu and Libo Counties and the remainder being scattered over Duyun, Dushan, Pingtang, Danzhai, Rongjiang, as well as Congjiang Counties of Guizhou Province and to the south at Yingdong Village in Rongshui County and at another village in Nandan County both in Guangxi Province. The Shuiyu Diao Cha Baogao 1956 studied these groups and concluded that Sui language in China varies only within a relatively constricted range distinguishing three phonologically/lexically distinct areas centered on the villages of Sandong (central area), Pandong (northwest), and Yang'an (far west). Viet Sui falls neatly into this rather invariant pattern of the main groups of the central area. Representative Sui data points have tone values in open syllables which compare as follows:

Viet Sui: $1 = 212; 2 = 42; 3 = 44; 4 = 53; 5 = 325; and 6 = 34$

Sandong: $1 = 13; 2 = 31; 3 = 33; 4 = 53; 5 = 35; and 6 = 55$

Pandong: $1 = 13; 2 = 31; 3 = 33; 4 = 53; 5 = 35; and 6 = 55$

Yang'an: $1 = 13; 2 = 31; 3 = 33; 4 = 53; 5 = 35; and 6 = 24/55$

3.2. Viet Sui Initials. There are about 70 initials in the Sui of China, including labial, alveolar, prepalatal, velar, and uvular points of articulation. At 三洞 Sandong, for instance, syllables can begin with the following initials. Those in boxes are found only in Han borrowings (cf.

\[ p \quad ph \quad mb \quad ?b \quad m \quad m \quad ?m \quad f \quad v \quad ?w \\
\text{ts} \quad \text{ts}h \quad s \quad z \\
\text{t} \quad \text{th} \quad n \quad n \quad ?n \quad e \quad j \quad ?j \\
k \quad kh \quad y \quad y \quad ?y \quad y \quad ?y \\
q \quad qh \quad k \\
? \quad h \\
pj \quad phj \quad mbj \quad ?bj \quad mj \quad mj \quad fj \quad vj \\
tj \quad thj \quad ndj \quad ?dj \quad nj \quad nj \quad ?nj \quad lj \\
\text{tsj} \quad \text{ts}hj \quad sj \\
tw \quad ndw \quad ?dw \\
tsw \quad ts\text{hw} \quad sw \quad lw \\
kw \quad khw \quad ?\eta w \\
\]

3.3. Locating the original settlement area of the Viet Sui. Even superficial comparison of Viet Sui and Sui forms from China yields near perfect overlap, with the following differences on the part of Viet Sui as compared with Sandong Sui:

Viet Sui | Sandong
---|---
hj or fj | e
\quad as in \quad laak^{8}hja^{3} \quad vs. \quad laak^{8}\text{ca}^{3} \\
\quad 'bride' \\
\quad hjou'tin' \quad vs. \quad ço\text{ŋ}tin' \quad 'heel' \\
\quad hjom' \quad vs. \quad cum' \quad 'heart' \\
\quad fjan' \quad vs. \quad caan' \quad 'garden' \\
l | k \\
\quad as in \quad li' \quad vs. \quad ke' \quad 'saliva' \\
\text{ng} | k \\
\quad as in \quad ngaan' \quad vs. \quad baan' \quad 'chin' \\
\quad cf. \quad Maonan \quad ngaan' \\
\eta g \quad or \quad \eta g | ?y \\
\quad as in \quad ?ge' \quad or \quad ?ge' \quad vs. \quad ?ye' \\
\quad 'husband' \quad but \quad note \quad ?ya' \quad 'paddy \\
\quad field' \quad in \quad both \quad V \quad and \quad S. \\
\text{o} \quad or \quad \text{ɔ} | e \\
\quad as in \quad qem^{4}\text{ŋa}^{3} \quad vs. \quad kem^{4}\text{ŋa}^{3} \\
\quad 'thunder' \\
u | o \\
\quad as in \quad mun' \quad vs. \quad mon' \quad 'fog'
about 70 examples of vocabulary from these places were compared with the Viet Sui data for initials and rimes, as reported in the Shuiyu Diaocha Baogao 1956. The following chart gives the results of that comparison.

Figure 13: Shared sounds of Viet Sui and nine Guizhou locations.

On the basis of shared features we found that the greatest similarity existed between Viet Sui and the Sui spoken at Shuilong in Guizhou Province, Sandu County, that is, location 6 circled above, with points 2 (Zhonghe) and 5 (Hengfeng) being potential runners-up, all sites in western Sandu County of Guizhou Province. Viet Sui is thus more like any of the central area forms of China Sui (1-6, 8) than it is like Pandong (7) or Yang’an (9).

4. Pa-hng. Pa-hng, also called Pà Thén and described early on by Bonifacy 1905 and 1908, is a member of the Miao Branch of Miao-Yao, the Bunu subgroup, cf. Mao et al. 1982. In 1995 Wang Fushi and Mao Zongwu revised the classification of languages within
the Miao-Yao family and placed Pa-hng as a separate language under Miao-Yao. The kind of Pa-hng studied here is rather different from that in Guangxi Province, China reported on in Edmondson 1992. To our knowledge, there exist only rather limited published linguistic details on Viet Pa-hng presented by Bonifacy. But one should note in addition to Bonifacy the work of Lajonqière 1906 and Nguyễn Minh Đức 1972, and for the Pa-hng of China the recent studies by Li Yunbin 1995 and Chen 1996.

The Pà Then are found in Hònq Quàng at Chiêm Hóa District of Tuyên Quang Province and also at Bắc Quang District at Tân Lập and Tân Thịnh Townships in Hà Giang Province. The first author conducted a two day elicitation session with Mr. Phán Văn Đông (45 years of age) and Mr. Lý Văn Ming (46 years of age) both from Hònq Quàng Village. Mr. Phán is a Pa-hng and Mr. Lý is a Sui married to a Pa-hng. Each of them speaks several languages including Vietnamese, Pa-hng, Sui, Tây, and some Guan Hua (the kind of officialese Chinese spoken widely in southern China and on the Sino-Vietnam Border). Our Viet Pa-hng analysis is based on examples produced by Mr. Phán, although he was occasionally coached by Mr. Lý, who is himself also bilingually competent in Pa-hng. They were both agriculturalists and had spent their entire lives in their home village. In this village the Pa-hng are called the Meò Hoa or Flowery Meo. In October 1996 fieldwork on Pa-hng was carried out with Mr. Tài Quang Vinh (32 years of age) from Bắc Quang, Tân Lập, Minh Thường Village. Both kinds of Pa-hng are very similar in phonology and lexicon. Here we mostly report on Hònq Quàng, as we have had more time to process this data.

4.1. Viet Pa-hng Tones. The eight tones of Hònq Quàng and Bắc Quang Pa-hng from our computer-assisted measurements showed very good correspondences to the Guangxi Laobao Bianlang Pa-hng data in Edmondson 1992 and to the data from southern Pa-hng in Li 1995. We present our findings organized according to their
historical tone sources (*A, *B, *C, *D) as follows:

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<td>43?</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
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Figure 14: Viet Pa-hng tone values according to historical categories

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<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
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Figure 15: Guangxi Sanjiang Laobao tone values according to historical categories

As can be seen in these charts, Viet Pa-hng possesses eight tones, compared to seven in Guangxi Laobao, because the original B tone in Viet Pa-hng splits into 54 and 21 trajectories, whereas this tone in Guangxi Pa-hng did not split. Not indicated in these figures is that Viet Pa-hng also has breathy voice quality as a feature of many vocables in low tones, i.e. 2, 4, 6, and 8, whereas Pa-hng of Laobao does not have this feature.
Viet Pa-hng Tone A

Figure 16: Viet Pa-hng tone A (> tone 1 and 2) illustrated in pja¹ 'five' and p vx³³ 'flower'.

Viet Pa-hng Tone B

Figure 17: Viet Pa-hng tone B (> tone 3 and 4) illustrated in p vx⁵⁴ 'house' and t v²¹ 'fire'.
Figure 18: Viet Pa-hng tone C (≥ tone 5 and 6) illustrated in ku⁵ ‘egg’ and ti⁶ ‘die’.

Figure 19: Viet Pa-hng tone D (≥ tone 7 and 8) illustrated in ?a?7 ‘duck’ and t⁸ ‘ten’.
In Viet Pa-hng a glottal stop or constriction occurs at the end of falling tones, i.e. 1, 3, and 7 often followed by a secondary release. This feature is visible in our tone plot, see especially the form for ‘house’ in tone B with its glottally terminated pitch pattern. Tone 5 and tone 7 have similar pitch contours, but tone 7 has a glottal stop at the end and in fact falls slightly. Tone 3 and 7 are shorter than non-glottalized counterparts, though vowel length is not a feature of this language.

4.2. Viet Pa-hng initial consonants are:

\[
\begin{align*}
p & \quad \text{ph} & \quad \text{mb} & \quad \text{m} & \quad \text{mh} & \quad \text{f} & \quad \text{w} \\
pj & \quad \text{phj} & \quad \text{mj} & \quad \text{mhj} \\
t & \quad \text{th} & \quad \text{nd} & \quad \text{n} & \quad \text{nh} & \quad \text{l} & \quad \text{ṭh} \\
tɕ & \quad \text{ʂ} \\
tj & \quad \text{lj} & \quad \text{lhj} & \quad \text{ṭhj} \\
tɕ & \quad \text{tɕh} & \quad \text{h} & \quad \text{ɕ} & \quad \text{j} \\
k & \quad \text{kh} & \quad \text{ŋ} & \quad \text{ŋh} & \quad \text{x} \\
kw & \quad \text{khw} \\
? & 
\end{align*}
\]

The corresponding Pa-hng forms from Guangxi Province in China are:

\[
\begin{align*}
p & \quad \text{ph} & \quad \text{m} & \quad \text{mh} & \quad \text{f} & \quad \text{w} \\
pj & \quad \text{phj} & \quad \text{mj} & \quad \text{mhj} \\
t & \quad \text{ṭh} & \quad \text{n} & \quad \text{ŋh} & \quad \text{l} & \quad \text{ḥ} & \quad \text{ṭh} \\
tɕ & \quad \text{ʂ} \\
tj & \quad \text{lj} & \quad \text{lhj} & \quad \text{ṭhj} \\
tɕ & \quad \text{tɕh} & \quad \text{n} & \quad \text{ŋh} & \quad \text{ɕ} & \quad \text{j} \\
k & \quad \text{kh} & \quad \text{ŋ} & \quad \text{ŋh} & \quad \text{x} \\
kw & \quad \text{khw} \\
q & \quad \text{qh} 
\end{align*}
\]
Viet Pa-hng, just as in many Pa-hng locations in China, preserves no final consonants. Even nasal consonants have been reduced to nasalization on the preceding vowel. Further worth noting, however, is that Pa-hng makes extensive use of spread glottis settings. As is especially evident in Viet Pa-hng but also to some lesser degree in the forms we studied in China, heavy airflow can be found throughout a syllable from the initial to syllable offset, often perceived as a kind of 'final h' effect.

4.3. Pa-hng vowels/syllabics. There are basically three rime types in Viet Pa-hng: (1) nine plain vowels; (2) eight nasalized vowels; and (3) four syllabic nasal syllable peaks. There are no diphthongs or consonant codas in Viet Pa-hng. The following rimes result:

\[
i e \varepsilon a a o o u \nu
\]

\[
i \varepsilon \varepsilon \ddot{a} \ddot{a} \ddot{u} \ddot{o} \ddot{u}
\]

\[
\mu \nu \eta \eta
\]

The vowel \(\nu\) occurs very frequently in Viet Pa-hng and also in several locations in Guangxi Province as a product of the collapse of several rime types, e.g. \(ai\) and \(au\).

4.4. Locating the original settlement area of the Viet Pa-hng. Li Juewei 1985 reports on the \(pa^{33} h^{35}\) Pa-hng of Shunhua Township in Libo County Guizhou Province and Zhang Jimin, Yu Zhishen, Li Juewei 1985 give details about Gundong Pa Hǒng [Pa-hng] of Liping County, Guizhou Province. Chen 1996 also describes Gundong Pa-hng in his study. Li 1995 compares the Pa-hng of Hunan, Guizhou, and Guangxi Provinces distinguishing northern vs. southern subtypes. Northern locations have the following features: no prenasalized initial stops, no breathy syllable components, final nasal -\(\eta\), and diphthongs \(ei, au, ai, uai, ua eu\), whereas the southern types possess the tendencies to have uvular consonants (in Guangxi Sanjiang County Wenjie Township), prenasalized stops, breathy syllable components, nasalized vowels, and no diphthongs. In Edmondson 1992 we
reported on the Pa-hng of Guangxi Province at Sanjiang and Rongshui County. Viet Pa-hng clearly falls into Li’s southern grouping, but at a site not reported by Li. Our own fieldwork in Sanjiang County identifies the probable original settlement of the Viet Pa-hng as Sanjiang Gaoji Township, a place that possesses no uvulars, prenasal stops, no final nasals or diphthongs, and most significantly a falling A1 tone.

5. Giây. Finally, we describe the Giây, one of Vietnam’s 54 official nationalities. According to the 1989 census there are about 40,000 Giây living in Vietnam. Most of them are found in territory very close to the Vietnam-China border. Information in Các dân tộc ít người ở Việt Nam (các tỉnh phía bắc) (1978:234) states that the Giây live in the districts of Bát Xát, Mường Khương and Bảo Yến of Lào Cai Province. We also saw them in the market at Sa Pa in the western part of Lào Cai near the Lai Châu border; they were from the village of Tả Van. The Giây of Mường Khương who call themselves Tudi [thuži] no longer speak their own language, only Guan Hua (the Chinese koiné of the borderlands.) The Giây also live in the districts of Yên Minh and Đồng Văn of Hà Giang Province, in the districts of Mường Te and Phong Thổ of Lai Châu Province, and in the districts of Bảo Lạc of Cao Bằng Province. The Giây are all relatively new immigrants from China. According to some reports there are also Giây just across the border in Yunnan Province in China. The Giây are not originally from the nearby areas in China, but instead they are believed to be scions from the 2.5 million strong Bouyei布依, who just like the Kam, Sui, and Pa-hng are found in distant Guizhou Province. From the data found in Giây household registries a number of Bouyei left Guizhou and traveled overland to southern Yunnan and northern Vietnam about 160 years ago, cf. Edmondson and Li 1996.

Linguistic information about the Giây is easier to
obtain than many other groups principally because of the work of Wm. J. Gedney. In 1991 Hudak published *William J. Gedney's the Yay language*, a 500 page glossary from a Mr. Nung To Phang from Mường Hum to the west of Lào Cai City in Bát Xát district. The speech reported in the present study is very similar to that investigated by Gedney. At least some of the cardinal features of Mr. Nung's Giáy were in evidence in the Lào Cai Giáy speaker we interviewed, e.g., identity of initials in hun\(^2\) ‘person’ and hun\(^1\) ‘rain’.

Our informant was a young student at the University of Culture in Hanoi, Vietnam studying for a position in the publishing industry. He was a Giáy (Bouyei) speaker from Lào Cai Province who came from a location 70 km east of Lào Cai City and lived within one km of the border with China. He reported that his family had many relatives still living in China near Hekou in Yunnan Province.

5.1. Viet Giáy tones. The three proto-tones have today reversed their values so that an original high tone is now low and vice versa, a phenomenon called tonal flip flop. The mechanism for such change is disputed. The A tones in Giáy have the values 33 and 35. The B tones have the values 21 and 42. The C tones have the values 23 and 34. In the dead tone syllables, DL and DS (closed syllable with long vowel, DL, and closed syllable with short vowel, DS) there are three distinct pitch tracks. The values of original low tones in DL and DS have merged to 23, whereas the high DL is 41 and the high DS is 33.

The tone splitting pattern is just as Gedney found it in his study, in which the old preglottalized initial series three forms in C tone go with the low set and not with the high as tone 34 below: 

\[ \text{\ldots} \]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>DL</th>
<th>DS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Viet Giay Tone A

*na*³⁵ *wet field*

*ka*³³ *leg*

Figure 20: Viet Giay tone A (> tone 1 and 2) illustrated in *ka*' leg' and *na*' wet field'.
Viet Giây Tone B

\[\text{pu42 father} \]
\[\text{kai21 chicken} \]

time

42
40
38
36
34

Figure 21: Viet Giây tone B (> tone 5 and 6) illustrated in \textit{kai} \textsuperscript{5} 'chicken' and \textit{pu} \textsuperscript{6} 'father'.

Viet Giây Tone C

\[\text{ma34 horse} \]
\[\text{pa23 aunt} \]

time

42
40
38
36
34

Figure 22: Viet Giây tone C (> tone 3 and 4) illustrated in \textit{pa} \textsuperscript{4} 'aunt' and \textit{ma} \textsuperscript{4} 'horse'.

Figure 23: Viet Giáy tone D (> tone 7S, tone 7L, tone 8S, and tone 8L) illustrated in pet\textsuperscript{7S} ‘duck’ and dok\textsuperscript{7L} ‘bone’, nok\textsuperscript{8S} ‘bird’, and laak\textsuperscript{8L} ‘child’.

5.3. Viet Giáy initials. Viet Giáy initials are virtually identical to those in Hudak with a few differences worthy of mention. Notably, Gedney’s /r/-/ corresponds to /\delta/-/ in Giáy, e.g. \textit{rist} \textsuperscript{6} \sim \textit{\delta f} dry field; \textit{rin}\textsuperscript{1} \sim \textit{\delta n}\textsuperscript{1} ‘rock’. The interdental fricative /\delta/ appears to come from proto-initials involving r or consonant + r, e.g. *\textit{thraap}\textsuperscript{DL} ‘carry on the ends of a pole’ becomes \textit{\delta aap}\textsuperscript{9}. The voiceless interdental fricative /\theta/ comes from *s or *z. The alveolar sibilant /s/ is the product of original *\textit{t}\textsuperscript{\j} or *\textit{d}\textsuperscript{3}. As for /f /v/, Viet Giáy has undergone a reversal from the state of the proto language; thus original *f has become Viet Giáy /v/ and original *v has become Viet Giáy /f/. As has been reported by Donna Snyder 1995, these features are typical of Bouyei in other places. The glottal fricative /h/ in Viet Giáy comes from velar continuants *h, *x, *\gamma. Note as well that in Gedney’s speaker the initial j- is pronounced as [z]. Gedney suggests (xxiii) that this phenomenon is a probable result of a Vietnamese education with a “Vietnamese-like teaching pronunciation which disappears in normal speech.” The [z] pronunciation of our speaker didn’t disappear in normal speech and z is
conspicuous in some locations in the southwestern area of Bouyei speech in Guizhou Province. Thus, we are disinclined toward dismissing /z-/ as a product of language-contact and suspect instead that /z-/ is a mutated historical inheritance.

5.5. Locating the original settlement area of the Viet Giáy. According to their own accounts the Giáy people of Vietnam came from Guizhou Province about 150 years ago, place unknown. In probing this question we compared our data on Giáy with information on the more than 40 locations in the Buyi Diaocha Baogao 1958. In this work there is an assemblage of shibboleth tests of phonology and lexicon that carve out subgroups among the Bouyei of Guizhou. We selected about 25 of these tests and compared them to the Viet Giáy data. We found that the Chinese locations designed 1-7 showed the greatest number of shared elements with Viet Giáy.

Measure of similarity of BDB locations and VN Giay

Figure 24: Comparison of the shared sounds and words of Giáy and 36 Guizhou locations in the Buyi Diaocha Baogao.
The sites circled in Figure 24 above are: Xingyi Bajie (1), Anlong Bakan (2), Anlong Leju (3), Ceheng Naiyan (4), Zhengfeng Lurong (5), Wangmo Zhexiang (6), and Luodian Poqiu (7). These data suggest then that the Giây in Vietnam originally came from the SW part of Guizhou, notably these sites. Only further research can determine which location looks most promising. There are other Bouyei related sites in Yunnan that also bear investigation. And of course, the other closely related speech communities in Vietnam called Bỏ Y, Quy Châu, and Nhàng may very well reflect separate original migrations from separate sites into Vietnam from China.

Notes

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2 Hereinafter referred to as Viet Kam to differentiate the variety of Kam spoken in Vietnam as distinct from related varieties in China. Likewise, we will use Viet Sui, Viet Pa-hng, and Viet Giây in the same fashion.

3 We have given the names of the people in question in Chinese inasmuch as the prominent family names among the Kam in Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangxi are Yang, Wu, and Shi.

4 We note that the DL tones mirror the pitch trajectories of the C tones and DS tones mirror the trajectory of the A tones.

5 We follow here the Gedney tradition for representing proto tone categories A, B, C, DL(ong), and DS(hort) even though it
results in some tone number reorderings, nor for Viet Kam are the four term vertical categories well suited, rather a simple two term system (reflecting original voiced vs. original voiceless initials) suffices.

6 To make these plots we used both direct recording into the computer and tape recordings, which were later played back into the computer. The signal in each case was digitized by means of the CECIL speech analysis system. It consists of a hardware A-D/D-A box and software for a small DOS computer. At a later time three or more pitch plots were compositied by means of some software we have developed, which computes the mean values from several repetitions of a syllable.

7 The Pa-hng are also widely known as the Red Yao and locally as the Eight-Name Yao 八姓瑶.

8 The 1, 2, 3, and 4 refer to consonant classes in the proto-language, as set out in Gedney 1972. The class 1 included aspirated stops, voiceless sonorants, and fricative; the class 2 referred to plain stops; class 3 to "preglottalized" voiced stops; and the class 4 to original voiced stops.

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