

# The Nguõn language of Quảng Bình, Vietnam

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## 1. Introduction

Today, the Nguõn population numbers about 20.000 persons. Going upstream on the river Nguõn Nậy, the Nguõn can be sighted at Đồng Lê, nearly 50 kilometres from National Highway 1. The Reverend L. Cadière (1905:349-50), accurately situated the Nguõn residential area and its administrative divisions at the beginning of the century.

« La moyenne vallée du Nguõn-Nậy, et surtout la haute vallée du Nguõn-Năn, sont habitées par deux populations: les gens du *Năm-Nguyên*, ou du *Nguõn*, et les *Thất-Sách*, ou *Sách*, ...

La population du *Năm-Nguyên*, ou du *Nguõn*, est répartie en onze villages, tous échelonnés dans la haute vallée du Nguõn-Năn. Ils sont divisés en deux groupes, comprenant chacun cinq villages, d'où le nom de *Năm-Nguyên*, « les cinq *Nguyên* ». Le premier groupe, situé plus au Nord, comprenant les villages de *Kwi-dat* (Qui-dat) 歸達, *An-dúk* (An-đúc) 安德, *Ba-nương* 巴娘, *Thaĩ-long* (Thanh-long) 青龍 et *Tân-kiêu* 新橋 (récemment divisé en deux: *Tân-kiêu* et *Tân-hợp* 新合). Ce premier groupe forme, avec quelques villages annamites du moyen Nguõn-Nậy, le canton de *Kơ-sa* (Cơ-sa) 沙. — Le second groupe comprend les villages de *Kổ-liêm* 古廉, *Bốk-thọ* 卜壽 (aujourd'hui *An-thọ* 安壽), *Kim-băng* 金榜, *Tân-lí* 新里 et *An-lạc* 安樂. C'est aujourd'hui le canton de *Kim-liĩ* 金齡. »

The geographic location of the Nguõn residential area has not changed since then, but today the former *Tuyên Hoá* district is divided into two: *Minh Hoá*, whose chief town is *Qui Đạt*, and *Tuyên Hoá*, which has its seat at *Đồng Lê*. Therefore, *Minh Hóá* is now the territory of the Nguõn and the *Sách*, while *Minh Hoá* is inhabited by the Nguõn and the Vietnamese. The point that is to be stressed is that the Nguõn have been living in the neighborhood of the Vietnamese and the *Sách*.

The history of the Nguõn people is still to be written. According to *J. Cuisinier* (1948:24), the Nguõn people are *Mường*: « ... dans le Quảng Bình les *Mường* s'appellent et sont appelés les Nguõn. » On the other hand, *Mạc Đường* (1964:34-36) claims that the Nguõn are Vietnamese who emigrated from *Nghệ An* and *Hà Tĩnh* and settled in the west of Quảng Bình towards the beginning of the 17th century. *Nguyễn Dương Bình* (1975:479-81) is of the same opinion. Like

Mạc Đường, he refers to family records to support his theory on the Vietnamese origin of the Nguồn. Mạc Đường (*op. cit.*, p. 34) actually affirms that in the 1960 census, nearly all the Nguồn declare their membership of the Việt ethnic group, dismissing the name Nguồn by which they were identified before 1960. In the reference work on the “determination” of minorities, edited by the Viện Dân Tộc Học (Institute of Ethnology) of Hanoi, the name Nguồn is not even mentioned in the list of ethnic minorities (1975:15-19).

It seems that political considerations are decisive for the Vietnamese authors cited above, in binding the Nguồn to the Việt. It is not surprising that from this point of view the Nguồn language is considered to be a Vietnamese dialect rather than a Mường dialect.

## 2. Field work

The pioneer in Nguồn studies is undoubtedly L. Cadière of La Société des Missions étrangères de Paris. As early as 1905, he had already published ethnographic and linguistic notes about the Nguồn people.

I, myself, have made field trips to study the Nguồn language in the district of Minh Hoá; the first time was in 1985. I went back there again in 1991.<sup>1</sup> In 1985 my two informants were Cao Ngạn, 77, and Đình Trước, 66, who were both born in the commune of Trung Hoá (ancient name: Thác Dài), Cổ Liêm village (other name: Trèm).

In 1991, my investigations took place in two different localities:

– in Cổ Liêm village; the informants were Thái Xuân Đào and Cao Ngọc Minh, both aged 40.

– in the coopérative of Yên Thọ or Bốc Thọ, Tân Hoá village; the informants were Trương Súc, 59; Trần Văn Phấn, 65; and Trương Quang Tiến, 19.

## 3. Phonology

Our predecesors have talked of Nguồn as if it were a homogenous language. In fact, there is more than one Nguồn dialect, and for this reason I have chosen two for phonological description: the dialect of Cổ Liêm and the dialect of Yên Thọ (or An Thọ).

In Nguồn, as in Vietnamese, words are largely monosyllabic. Each syllable contains an initial, a nucleus and a tone. We examine successively these elements in comparison with Vietnamese whose phonetic system is well known. Below, the order of citation is Vietnamese, Nguồn of Cổ Liêm (CL), Nguồn of Yên Thọ (YT). Quốc ngữ script, i.e. Vietnamese alphabet, is used for Vietnamese examples.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Trần Trí Dõi of Hanoi University for helping me carry out my field trips. Of course, any errors in this paper are mine.

3.1 Initials

3.1.1 Labials

Corresponding to the Vietnamese voiced *b*, CL has the voiceless *p* in opposition to the YT dialect which has undergone the same change as in Vietnamese:

Việt	CL	YT				
b	p	b	bông	poŋ <sup>1</sup>	boŋ <sup>1</sup>	‘flower’
			bụng	puŋ <sup>4</sup>	buŋ <sup>4</sup>	‘belly’
			bó	po <sup>3</sup>	bo <sup>3</sup>	‘bundle’
b	b	b	bố	bo <sup>3</sup>	bo <sup>3</sup>	‘father’
			bò	bo <sup>2</sup>	bo <sup>2</sup>	‘ox’

What corresponds to the Việt fricative *f*, is generally the aspirated *p’* in Ngủn. But as shown in some examples, instead of *p’*, we may have *b* in YT:

Việt	CL	YT				
f(ph) <sup>2</sup>	f	f	phân	fʰən <sup>1</sup>	fʰən <sup>1</sup>	‘manure’
f(ph)	p’	b	phồng	p’uŋ <sup>2</sup>	buŋ <sup>6</sup>	‘to inflate’
			phổi	p’oŋ <sup>5</sup>	boŋ <sup>5</sup>	‘lung’
f(ph)	p’	p’	pheo	p’ew <sup>1</sup>	p’ew <sup>1</sup>	‘bamboo’
			phần	p’ʰən <sup>2</sup>	p’ʰən <sup>2</sup>	‘portion’

In relation with the Vietnamese voiced *v*, we have the following correspondences in the two dialects of Ngủn:

Việt	CL	YT				
v	p	b	vôi	pon <sup>1</sup>	bon <sup>1</sup>	‘lime’
			vỏ	po <sup>6</sup>	bo <sup>6</sup>	‘shell, bark (of tree)’
v	v	b	*vết	vet <sup>7</sup>	bet <sup>7</sup>	‘trace, mark’
v	p	v	*vụng	poŋ <sup>4</sup>	vuŋ <sup>4</sup>	‘clumsy’
v	p	m	vuốt	put <sup>7</sup>	mut <sup>7</sup>	‘to smooth’
v	p’	p’	vỗ	p’o <sup>5</sup>	p’o <sup>5</sup>	‘to clap, tap’
v	v	v	vôi	vo <sup>j1</sup>	vo <sup>j1</sup>	‘elephant’
			vịt	vit <sup>8</sup>	vit <sup>8</sup>	‘duck’

Note that in Vietnamese, *vụng* ‘clumsy’ and *vết* ‘trace’ have *bống* and *bốt* as variant forms, respectively.

Many examples illustrate the change of a Proto-Việt-Mường (PVM) *b* into *v* in Ngủn and to *m* in present-day Vietnamese:

<sup>2</sup> Quốc ngữ scripts are shown within brackets.

Việt	CL	YT				
m	m	m	mỡ	mɔ̃ <sup>5</sup>	mɔ̃ <sup>5</sup>	'grease, fat'
			mưa	mia <sup>1</sup>	mia <sup>1</sup>	'rain'
m	v	m	*màng	vaŋ <sup>3</sup>	maŋ <sup>2</sup>	'(spider's) web'
			(rau) muống	vuoŋ <sup>3</sup>	muoŋ <sup>3</sup>	'bindweed, spinach'
m	m	v	mái	maj <sup>3</sup>	van <sup>3</sup>	'roof (Rục:bal)'
m	v	v	may	vã <sup>1</sup>	vã <sup>1</sup>	'to sew (Rục:bãl)'
			muối	vɔj <sup>3</sup>	vɔj <sup>3</sup>	'salt (Rục:boj)'

\*Besides *màng nhện* 'cobweb', we have also *váng nhện* in Vietnamese.

### 3.1.2 Apicals

The PVM sibilant *s* generally has changed to *t* in Vietnamese and Nguồn. But instead of *t*, the aspirated *t'* may be produced in both dialects of Nguồn, a correspondence which is also found in Western Mường dialects (Thạch Bì [Hoà Bình], Mĩ Sơn [Hà Đông], Nho Quan [Ninh Bình], Cf. Maspero 1912:44). Notice a peculiar feature of the YT dialect: the stop *t* is often replaced by a glottal stop ʔ.

Việt	CL	YT				
t	t	ʔ	tỏi	tɔj <sup>5</sup>	ʔɔj <sup>5</sup>	'garlic'
			tim	tim <sup>1</sup>	ʔim <sup>1</sup>	'heart'
t	t'	t'	tôm	t'om <sup>1</sup>	t'om <sup>1</sup>	'shrimp'
			tay	t'aj <sup>1</sup>	t'aj <sup>1</sup>	'hand'
			tóc	t'ak <sup>7</sup>	t'ak <sup>7</sup>	'hair'

CL still preserves the apical *t* which has become *d* in YT and in Vietnamese (*d* in quốc ngữ). Like the voiceless *t*, the voiced *d* is often replaced in YT by ʔ:

Việt	CL	YT				
d (đ)	d	d	độc	dok <sup>8</sup>	dok <sup>8</sup>	'poisonous'
			điếu	diew <sup>3</sup>	diew <sup>3</sup>	'pipe (of tobacco)'
d (đ)	d	ʔ	đu đủ	du <sup>1</sup> du <sup>5</sup>	ʔu <sup>1</sup> ʔu <sup>5</sup>	'papaw ( <i>bot.</i> )'
			đèn	den <sup>2</sup>	ʔen <sup>2</sup>	'lamp'
d (đ)	t	d	đám	tam <sup>3</sup>	dam <sup>3</sup>	'crowd'
			đội	toj <sup>4</sup>	doj <sup>4</sup>	'to carry on head'
d (đ)	t	ʔ	đói	ton <sup>3</sup>	ʔon <sup>3</sup>	'hungry'
			đất	tət <sup>7</sup>	ʔət <sup>7</sup>	'earth'

What corresponds to the Vietnamese aspirated stop *t'* (*th*) is generally the same phoneme in Nguồn but in its place we may also find the affricate *h*. One single example illustrates the correspondence Nguồn-Việt: *š* – *t'* (*th*); this correspondence is, however, attested in Vietnamese in the pairs *seo* – *thèo* 'scar', *sinh* – *thình* 'to swell' and *sưa* – *thưa* 'sparse':

Việt	CL	YT				
t' (th)	t'	t'	thở	t'ə <sup>5</sup>	t'ə <sup>5</sup>	'to breathe'
			thịt	t'it <sup>8</sup>	t'it <sup>8</sup>	'meat'
t' (th)	t'	h	*thối	t'oj <sup>3</sup>	hoj <sup>3</sup>	'to stink'
t' (th)	h	h	*thơm	həm <sup>1</sup>	həm <sup>1</sup>	'to smell good'
t' (th)	ʃ	ʃ	thưa	ʃia <sup>1</sup>	ʃia <sup>1</sup>	'sparse'

\*K. Gregerson (1969:156) notes that « Vietnamese /th/ corresponds often to Mường /h/... » There is one example where the aspirated t' in CL corresponds to ʃ in YT and h/s in Vietnamese: t'ə<sup>3</sup> (tə<sup>3</sup>) – ʃə<sup>3</sup> – hói/sói (trán) 'bald (forehead)'.

Different Nguồn phonemes correspond to d in quốc ngữ script (pronounced /z/ in Tonkinese dialects and /j/ in Cochinchinese dialects):

Việt	CL	YT				
z/j (d)	z/j	z/j	dốc	zok <sup>7</sup>	jok <sup>7</sup>	'slope'
			dâu	zu <sup>1</sup>	zu <sup>1</sup>	'daughter-in-law'
			dầu	jəw <sup>2</sup>	zəw <sup>2</sup>	'oil'
z/j (d)	t	?	da	ta <sup>1</sup>	?a <sup>1</sup>	'skin'
			dao	taw <sup>1</sup>	?aw <sup>1</sup>	'knife'
			dày	təj <sup>2</sup>	?əj <sup>2</sup>	'thick'
			dưới	təj <sup>3</sup>	?əj <sup>3</sup>	'under (neath)'
z/j (d)	t'	-	*dỗ	t'o <sup>5</sup>	-	'to comfort'
z/j (d)	c	c	dượng	ciəŋ <sup>4</sup>	ciəŋ <sup>4</sup>	'mother's brother-in-law'
z/j (d)	c	z	dấm	cəm <sup>3</sup>	zəm <sup>3</sup>	'vinegar'
z/j (d)	j	c	dép	jep <sup>7</sup>	cep <sup>7</sup>	'sandal'
z/j (d)	ɗ	ɗ	dừa	ɗia <sup>2</sup>	ɗia <sup>2</sup>	'coconut palm'

\*The correspondence d – t' also holds good for the dialects of Huế and of Northern Quảng Bình (L. Cadière, 1902:66-67).

Concerning the lateral l, we have the following examples:

Việt	CL	YT				
l	l	l	lông	loŋ <sup>1</sup>	loŋ <sup>1</sup>	'feather, hair (of body)'
			lỗ	lo <sup>6</sup>	lo <sup>6</sup>	'hole'

Nguồn still preserves the preglottalized d, which has become the alveolar nasal n in Vietnamese. This sound is strongly palatalized in some examples and can be transcribed as dʲ: dak<sup>7</sup>/dʲak<sup>7</sup> 'water'. In the Nguồn dialect of Sặt it is pronounced j, which is very close to z in the Như Xuân dialect where «deer», zay corresponds to nai in Vietnamese (H. Maspero, 1912:61). The example in Vietnamese, dăm/năm ba xu 'five to three cents', shows that the preglottalized d has sometimes changed into z (d in quốc ngữ) in this language. The following correspondences show that the present-day Vietnamese nasal n has come from two different origins:

Việt	CL	YT				
n	n	n	nước	niək <sup>7</sup>	niək <sup>7</sup>	‘country’
			năm	năm <sup>1</sup>	năm <sup>1</sup>	‘year’
n	d/dj	d/dj	nước	dak <sup>7</sup> /đak <sup>7</sup>		‘water (Sạt: jak <sup>7</sup> )’
			nếp	dep <sup>7</sup> /đep <sup>7</sup>		‘glutinous rice’
			no	dăm <sup>1</sup>	dăm <sup>1</sup>	‘full (after eating)’
			năm	dăm <sup>1</sup>	dăm <sup>1</sup>	‘five’

### 3.1.3 Retroflex

It may be said that Nguồn no longer has any consonant clusters. In CL the initial clusters *bl* and *tl*, which were still found in Middle Vietnamese, have changed into *t* and sometimes into *l*, the stop *t* being dropped in the last instance. In YT the cluster’s stop manifests itself in some examples by a slight *ʔ*.

Việt	CL	YT				
t (tr)	t	ʔl	trời	təj <sup>2</sup>	ʔləj <sup>2</sup>	‘sky’
			trăng	tʰəŋ <sup>1</sup>	ʔləŋ <sup>1</sup>	‘moon’
			trâu	tʰu <sup>1</sup>	ʔlu <sup>1</sup>	‘water buffalo’
t (tr)	t	l	trái	tʰaj <sup>3</sup>	ləj <sup>3</sup>	‘fruit’
t (tr)	l	l	tranh	lʰəŋ <sup>1</sup>	ləŋ <sup>1</sup>	‘reed’

The apical retroflex spirant *ʃ* is derived from an older fusion of a prefix plus *r*. The cluster *prefix+r* is still preserved in Rục and is manifest in Vietnamese as shown in the pair *trống/sống* ‘male’. But instead of *ʃ*, we may have the aspirated *tʰ* in CL. For each of the correspondences Việt - Nguồn: *ʃ* (*s*) - *v* and *ʃ* (*s*) - *l*, only one example is found :

Việt	CL	YT				
ʃ (s)	ʃ	ʃ	sao	ʃaw <sup>1</sup>	ʃaw <sup>1</sup>	‘star’
			sỏi	ʃɔŋ <sup>5</sup>	ʃɔŋ <sup>5</sup>	‘gravel’
			trống/sống	ʃɔŋ <sup>3</sup>	ʃɔŋ <sup>3</sup>	‘male (of chicken)’
ʃ (s)	tʰ	ʃ	sét	tʰɛt <sup>7</sup>	ʃɛt <sup>7</sup>	‘rust’
			song	tʰɔŋ <sup>1</sup>	ʃɔŋ <sup>1</sup>	‘rattan’
ʃ (s)	r	r	sữa	ra <sup>5</sup>	ra <sup>5</sup>	‘milk’
ʃ (s)	l	l	sáng	ləŋ <sup>3</sup>	ləŋ <sup>3</sup>	‘bright, to light’

The «curieux» instances where the Vietnamese *r* corresponds to an aspirated *tʰ* in the Northern Mường were pointed out by Maspero (1912:67). This correspondence also occurs in Nguồn. For the correspondence Nguồn-Việt *ʃ*/*t* - *r*, only one example is found:

Việt	CL	YT				
r	r	r	rậm	rəm <sup>4</sup>	rəm <sup>4</sup>	‘bushy’
			rễ	rɛt <sup>7</sup>	rɛt <sup>7</sup>	‘root’
r	tʰ	tʰ	răng	tʰəŋ <sup>1</sup>	tʰəŋ <sup>1</sup>	‘tooth’
			rắn	tʰəŋ <sup>3</sup>	tʰəŋ <sup>3</sup>	‘snake’
r	ʃ	t	rống	ʃɔŋ <sup>3</sup>	tɔŋ <sup>3</sup>	‘to trumpet (elephant)’

3.1.4 Palatals

Generally speaking, corresponding to the voiceless *c* in Nguõn, Vietnamese has the voiceless *c* (*ch*) for first register tones and the voiced *j* (*gi*) for second register tones. The palatal *c* in CL often corresponds to a stop, whether *d*, *t*, or *ʔ* in the YT dialect. Other Việt-Nguõn correspondences also may be noted:

Việt	CL	YT				
c(ch)	s	c	chí	si <sup>3</sup>	ci <sup>3</sup>	'louse (in hair of head)'
			chị	si <sup>4</sup>	ci <sup>4</sup>	'elder sister'
c(ch)	s	s	chày	sǎj <sup>2</sup>	sǎj <sup>2</sup>	'pestle'
c(ch)	c	c	chớp	cəp <sup>7</sup>	cəp <sup>7</sup>	'lightning'
			chảy	căn <sup>5</sup>	căn <sup>5</sup>	'to flow'
c (ch)	c	t	chèo	cəw <sup>2</sup>	təw <sup>2</sup>	'to row'
			chăn	căn <sup>1</sup>	tăn <sup>1</sup>	'blanket'
			chè	cə <sup>2</sup>	tə <sup>2</sup>	'tea'
c (ch)	t	ʔ	chìm	tim <sup>2</sup>	ʔim <sup>2</sup>	'to sink'
j (gi)	j/z	j/z	giặc	jàk <sup>8</sup>	zàk <sup>8</sup>	'bandit'
			giết	jiət <sup>7</sup>	ziət <sup>3</sup>	'to kill'
j (gi)	c	d	giận	cǎn <sup>4</sup>	dǎn <sup>4</sup>	'angry'
j (gi)	c	t	giỡn	cən <sup>4</sup>	tən <sup>6</sup>	'to joke'
			giàu	cǎw <sup>2</sup>	tǎw <sup>2</sup>	'rich'
j (gi)	c	ʔ/t	giùi	cuj <sup>1</sup>	ʔuj <sup>2</sup> /tuj <sup>2</sup>	'to perforate, drill'
j (gi)	s	s	gió	sɔ <sup>3</sup>	sɔ <sup>3</sup>	'wind'
j (gi)	s	c	gi/chi	si <sup>1</sup>	ci <sup>1</sup>	'what'
			giường	siəŋ <sup>2</sup>	ciəŋ <sup>2</sup>	'bed'
			giam	sam <sup>1</sup>	cam <sup>1</sup>	'to jail'
j (gi)	c	c	giếng	ciəŋ <sup>3</sup>	ciəŋ <sup>3</sup>	'a well'
j (gi)	ʃ	ʃ	già	ʃa <sup>2</sup>	ʃa <sup>2</sup>	'old'
			giữa	ʃia <sup>5</sup>	ʃia <sup>5</sup>	'the middle'
s (x)	s	s	xương	siəŋ <sup>1</sup>	siəŋ <sup>1</sup>	'bone'
			xỏ	sɔ <sup>5</sup>	sɔ <sup>5</sup>	'to thread'
			xấu	sɔw <sup>3</sup>	sɔw <sup>3</sup>	'bad, ugly'

Maspero (1912:60, note 2) claimed that the palatal nasal *ɲ* seems to represent an ancient *y*. This statement may be proved correct with two examples: «spider» and «to jump»:

Việt	CL	YT				
ɲ (nh)	ɲ	ɲ	nhà	ɲa <sup>2</sup>	ɲa <sup>2</sup>	'house'
			nhím	ɲim <sup>3</sup>	ɲim <sup>3</sup>	'porcupine'
ɲ (nh)	j	z	nhện	jen <sup>4</sup>	zen <sup>4</sup>	'spider'
			nhảy	jàn <sup>5</sup>	zăn <sup>5</sup>	'to jump'

3.1.5 Velars

Nguõn still preserves the voiceless *k* which corresponds to the Vietnamese voiced *γ* (*g, gh*):

Việt	CL	YT				
k (c, k)	k	k	có cây	kɔ <sup>3</sup> kən <sup>1</sup>	kɔ <sup>3</sup> kən <sup>1</sup>	'to have' 'tree'
x (kh)	x	x	khỉ khái	xi <sup>5</sup> xan <sup>3</sup>	xi <sup>5</sup> xan <sup>3</sup>	'monkey' 'tiger'
ɣ (g, gh)	k	k	gạo gà	kɔw <sup>3</sup> ka <sup>2</sup>	kɔw <sup>3</sup> ka <sup>2</sup>	'rice' 'chicken'
ɣ (g, gh)	x	k	ghép	xep <sup>7</sup>	kep <sup>7</sup>	'to assemble (surfaces)'
ɣ (g, gh)	x	x	gặp gần	xáp <sup>7</sup> xǎn <sup>1</sup>	xáp <sup>7</sup> xǎn <sup>1</sup>	'to meet' 'close, near'
ɣ (g, gh)	x	ɣ	gàu	xǎw <sup>1</sup>	ɣǎw <sup>2</sup>	'bailer'
ɣ (g, gh)	s	s	gừng	sɔŋ <sup>2</sup>	sɔŋ <sup>2</sup>	'ginger'
ŋ (ng, ngh)	ŋ	ŋ	ngựa ngày	ŋja <sup>4</sup> ŋǎj <sup>2</sup>	ŋja <sup>4</sup> ŋǎj <sup>2</sup>	'horse' 'day'

### 3.1.6 Glottals

Việt	CL	YT				
h	h	h	hàm hút	ham <sup>2</sup> hut <sup>7</sup>	ham <sup>2</sup> hut <sup>7</sup>	'jaw' 'to smoke'

### 3.2 Finals

The PVM final liquid occurring as *l* in many languages of the group corresponds to *n* in Nguồn and to *j* (quốc ngữ: *i* or *y*) in Vietnamese:

Việt	CL	YT				
j (i, y)	n	n	mây cây	mǎn <sup>1</sup> kən <sup>1</sup>	mǎn <sup>1</sup> kən <sup>1</sup>	'cloud' 'tree'

But the Nguồn final *-n* has a double origin. The following examples with the *hỏi-ngã* tones have as their correspondences in Rục words ending in *-h* or *-lh*. M. Ferlus (1975:30) has reconstructed *-s* which gives *-ʃ* in Thavung, *-lh* in Pakatan:

Việt	CL	YT	Rục	
mũi	mun <sup>5</sup>	mun <sup>2</sup>	mulʃ	'nose'
lưỡi	lan <sup>5</sup>	lan <sup>5</sup>	lɔarh	'tongue'

### 3.3 Vocalics

The following Việt-Nguồn correspondences show that the second language has preserved the ancient vocalic values well:



Việt	CL	YT				
ia (ua)	a	a	lửa	la <sup>5</sup>	la <sup>5</sup>	'fire'
			sữa	ra <sup>5</sup>	ra <sup>5</sup>	'milk'

Notice, however, that the change *a > ia* has occurred in Nguồn for many instances: t'ăŋ<sup>1</sup> sia<sup>5</sup> (Việt: răng sữa) 'milk-teeth'; riã<sup>4</sup> (Việt: rựa) 'pruning knife':

o (o)	ă	ă	tóc	t'ăk <sup>7</sup>	t'ăk <sup>7</sup>	'hair (of head)'
o (ô)	u	u	phồng	fuŋ <sup>2</sup>	buŋ <sup>6</sup>	'to inflate'
			rốn	t'un <sup>3</sup>	t'un <sup>3</sup>	'nombil'
o (ô)	o	u	gối	kon <sup>3</sup>	kun <sup>3</sup>	'knee'
o (ô)	o:	o:	lông	loŋ <sup>1</sup>	loŋ <sup>1</sup>	'feather, hair'
			ngỗng	ŋoŋ <sup>5</sup>	ŋoŋ <sup>5</sup>	'goose'
			trúc	ʈo:k <sup>3</sup>	ʈlo:k <sup>3</sup>	'head'
i (ư)	ə	ə	trúng	ʈəŋ <sup>3</sup>	ʈləŋ <sup>3</sup>	'egg'
ia (ươ)	a	a	nuống	naŋ <sup>3</sup>	naŋ <sup>3</sup>	'to grill'
			người	ŋaj <sup>2</sup>	ŋaj <sup>2</sup>	'man'
			nước	ɗak <sup>7</sup>	ɗak <sup>7</sup>	'water'
ua (ua)	o	o	rùa	ɾo <sup>2</sup>	ɾo <sup>2</sup>	'turtle'
uo (uô)	o	o	muối	bɔj <sup>3</sup>	vɔj <sup>3</sup>	'salt'
			ruột	ɾo:t <sup>8</sup>	ɾo:t <sup>8</sup>	'bowels'
əj (ây)	i	i	chấy	ci <sup>3</sup>	ci <sup>3</sup>	'louse (in hair of head)'
			đây	ni <sup>1</sup>	ni <sup>1</sup>	'this, here'
			mây	mi <sup>1</sup>	mi <sup>1</sup>	'rattan'
əw (âu)	o	o	chấu	co <sup>3</sup>	to <sup>3</sup>	'grasshopper'
			đâu	no <sup>1</sup>	no <sup>1</sup>	'where'
əw (âu)	u	u	trầu	ʈu <sup>2</sup>	ʈlu <sup>2</sup>	'betel'
			trâu	ʈu <sup>1</sup>	ʈlu <sup>1</sup>	'buffalo'
			gấu	ku <sup>4</sup>	ku <sup>4</sup>	'bear'

### 3.4 Tones

The description of the tone system uses the etymological notation with numbers. Therefore, tones are distributed into two series, high (first register) and low (second register). First register tones marked by odd numbers historically correspond in Vietnamese to the following tones: *ngang* (a<sup>1</sup>/a), *sắc* (a<sup>3</sup>/á), *hỏi* (a<sup>5</sup>/ả); second register tones marked by even numbers have their correspondences in the Vietnamese tones: *huyền* (a<sup>2</sup>/à), *nặng* (a<sup>4</sup>/ạ) and *ngã* (a<sup>6</sup>/ã). Those six tones are distributed into three categories: A (1, 2), B (3, 4) and C (5, 6). To the extent that syllables ending in a stop form a separate category labeled D, Nguồn and Vietnamese alike will have an 8-tone system: the two extra tones are: (ap<sup>7</sup>/áp) and (ap<sup>8</sup>/áp). Pho.netic features of Nguồn tones are not the same as Vietnamese.

Nguồn tones 2 and 4, i.e. those of the etymological low series, start higher than tones 1 and 3, respectively. In comparison with Vietnamese, there is a sort of inversion of the height of the starting point. Therefore, tone 2 which is higher than tone 1 is pronounced at an even higher level than the Vietnamese *ngang* tone.

Likewise, tone 3 which historically corresponds to the *sắc* tone starts lower than tone 4 which is matched with the *nặng* tone. Tone 3 is a rising tone; tone 4 is a falling one; both are glottalized at the end. Because of the intonation contours of 4 and 6, these two tones are often hard to distinguish. This non-distinction is not specific to Nguõn; it happens to occur also in other Quảng Bình dialects. In the Vietnamese dialects of Bắc Trạch and Hạ Trạch, two villages located at the mouth of the Gianh River, all syllables having *hỏi*, *ngã* and *nặng* tones are pronounced the same way, i.e. in the *nặng* tone (Vương Hữu Lễ and *al.*, 1991). Nguõn tone 3 and standard Vietnamese (VS) *nặng* tone are very much alike; therefore, this Nguõn tone is no different in pronunciation from the *sắc* tone in Haut-Annam (HA) dialects. This explains the many correspondences *nặng* /VS–*sắc* /HA enumerated by L. Cadière (1902: 80).

In listening to the Nguõn talking to each other, one realizes that sometimes whole scraps of their conversation are spoken with Vietnamese tones, and the investigator of Vietnamese origin has the strange feeling of experiencing a phenomenon of mixed language: a short passage of Vietnamese followed by utterances in Nguõn. Indeed many examples exist, for which it is rather the Vietnamese tone that is produced instead of the Nguõn tone. For these instances, we use the notation  $\epsilon^2$  to indicate that the word should be pronounced with the Vietnamese *huyền* tone: *den<sup>2</sup>* = *den* (đèn ‘lamp’).

#### 4. Relationship between Nguõn, Vietnamese and Mường

We now return to the question that so often haunts Vietnamese linguists and ethnologists: is Nguõn a dialect of Vietnamese or a dialect of Mường? We agree with Nguyễn Văn Tài (1975) that, Nguõn is phonologically closer to Mường than to Vietnamese. But we have to recognize that the YT dialect, in contrast with the CL, is in certain phonological aspects closer to Vietnamese than to Mường. For instance, YT as well as Vietnamese oppose a voiced *b* to a voiceless *p* in CL and in Mường.

In relation to this matter, let us examine the topic of negation. Before the 17th century, the negative particle in Vietnamese was *chẳng* as attested in *Brevis Declaratio*, an appendix to *Dictionarium* by A. de Rhodes (1651). But since then, *không*, a morpheme of Chinese origin and transcribed by the character 空 ‘void, empty’ has begun to be used as a negative auxiliary. From the first decades of our century, *không* as a negative particle has prevailed over *chẳng* and tends to suppress the latter (see Nguyễn P.P., 1994). In present-day Vietnamese, *không* is the main and common negative particle. Now, we have to recognize that in Mường, *chẳng* is still the prevailing negative auxiliary while in Nguõn it is *không* that functions as such. In this case, Nguõn turns out to be closer to Vietnamese than to Mường.

## 5. Conclusion

Taking into account all the aspects considered above, we think that all dialects are to be treated on the same footing. The Nguồn language is to be dealt with in terms of affinity and not in terms of affiliation of one language to another. In fact, Nguồn may be closer to the Mường language of reference than to Vietnamese, but it is a dialect of neither one.

The main aim of this paper is to offer an introductory chapter on the Nguồn language. This will be followed by a publication composed of a vocabulary and some Nguồn stories.

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