

Some Kam-Tai loan-words in Mon-Khmer languages

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In the past, many Tai-Kadai loan-words in Mon-Khmer languages in Yunnan have been considered to have come from the Dai language, as Mon-Khmer peoples have been living together with Dai people for a long time. But according to our recent investigations these Mon-Khmer languages have borrowed not only from Dai but also from other Kam-Tai languages such as Zhuang, Dong (Kam), Shui, Li and others, who do not inhabit the same area as these Mon-Khmer peoples. So these non-Dai loan-words are of great value in studying the relationships between Mon-Khmer and Kam-Tai in the past. This paper examines the origin of some of the loan-words found in Wa, Bulang, De'ang and Khmu, Mon-Khmer languages spoken in the southwest border areas of Yunnan.

Many of the words cited are common Tai-Kadai etyma, but the specific source of these borrowings is not the neighboring Dai but other more geographically distant languages. A few could possibly have originated in Mon-Khmer and been borrowed into Tai-Kadai.

1. Kam-Tai loan-words in Wa

The Wa dialects cited include Aishuai, Nanqian, Menggong, and Masan. The Kam-Tai sources include Zhuang (Du'an, Mashan, Longzhou, Guixian, Wuming dialects), Li, Shui, Dong, and Mulao. The Dai semantic equivalent is included for comparison.

Wa	gloss	apparent source	Dai equiv.
ɾɔm (Aishuai)	'water'	ram ⁴ Du'an, Mashan Zhuang	nam ⁴
mɯŋ (Nanqian)	'ditch'	mɯŋ ¹ Mashan Zhuang	hɔŋ ⁶
ɔŋ (Aishuai)	'mountain'	koŋ ¹ pja ¹ Mashan Zhuang	ɔɔi ¹
goʔ (Menggong)	'paddy'	ko:k ⁷ Mashan Zhuang	
kiŋ (Menggong)	'ginger'	kiŋ ¹ Longzhou Zhuang	xiŋ ¹
rɛ (Aishuai)	'boat'	ru ² Mashan Zhuang	hə ²
ro (Menggong)	'leak'	ro ⁶ Mashan Zhuang	ho ⁶
kɾup (Aishuai)	'overtake'	kɾap ⁷ Guixian Zhuang	xap ⁷
ʔɔt (Aishuai)	'mop'	ʔut ⁷ Mashan Zhuang	tset ⁸
liɑŋ (Aishuai)	'herd'	laŋ ⁶ Mashan Zhuang	poi ⁵

klau (Aishuai)	'mix'	klau ⁴	Wuming Zhuang	xon ²
piu (Masan)	'feel'	pu ²	Mashan Zhuang	
tup (Aishuai)	'hit'	tup ⁸	Mashan Zhuang	ti ¹
tɕut (Aishan)	'weak'	ɕut ⁷	Mashan Zhuang	tsaŋ ¹
puŋ piəŋ (Aishuai)	'butterfly'	phoŋ ³	pheŋ ⁵ Tongshi Li	ka:p ⁹ bə ³
ʔa muəŋ (Masan)	'ghost'	maŋ ¹	Shui	phi ¹
pun (Menggong)	'fly'	pən ³	Dong	
tauk (Masan)	'pull'	da:k ⁷	Shui	tuət ⁸
kət (Menggong)	'bite'	kit ¹⁰	Dong	xop ⁷
kum (Aishuai)	'keep in mouth'	ka:m ²	Wuming Zhuang	um ¹
həp (Menggong)	'drink'	hyop ⁷	Mulao	kin ¹
lək (Masan)	'boil'	lak ⁹	Dong	fat ⁸
tho? (Menggong)	'little'	to ²	Tongshi Li	noi ⁴

2. Kam-Tai loan-words in De'ang

The De'ang dialects cited include Chayejing, Nannu, Namhu, and Xiaochanggou. The Kam-Tai sources include Zhuang (Longzhou, Liujiang, Donglan, Mashan, Wuming dialects), Dong, Mulao, Maonan, and Shui; Gelao is a little more distantly related.

De'ang	gloss	apparent source		Dai equiv.
la kau ⁵¹ (Chayejing)	'rice'	khau ³	Longzhou Zhuang	xau ³
zu (Nannu)	'look'	zu	Liujiang Zhuang	jem ³
lui ⁷ (Namhu)	'bad'	lui ⁴	Donglan Zhuang	hai ⁴
ŋə (Xiaochanggou)	'big'	ŋə ³	Mashan Zhuang	laŋ ¹
rǎŋ (Namhu)	'bamboo'	ɣuaŋ ¹³	Gelao	mai ⁴ bo ¹
kloi ⁵¹ (Chayejing)	'banana'	kloi ³	Wuming Zhuang	koï ³
kok ⁵⁵ khɣi ⁵⁵ (Chayejing)	'son-in-law'	luk ⁸ khəi ¹	Longzhou Zhuang	luk ⁸ xəi ¹
khək (Namhu)	'guest'	khək ⁷	Longzhou Zhuang	xək ⁹
phup ⁵¹ (Chayejing)	'lungs'	pup ⁹	Dong	pət ⁹
san ⁵⁵ (Chayejing)	'thread'	sa:n ⁵	Dong	mai ¹
təŋ (Namhu)	'cook'	təŋ	Dong, Mulao, Maonan	tum ³
ɣǎn ⁵¹ (Chayejing)	'red'	ha:n ³	Shui	dəŋ ¹

(The initial consonant ɣ is the ancient form of *h* in Shui.)

3. Kam-Tai loan-words in Bulang

The Bulang dialects cited include Gantang, Pangpin, and Man'e. The Kam-Tai sources include Zhuang (Mashan, Longzhou, Yong Nan Tuyu, Yong'an, Sanjiang, and Wuming dialects), Li (Tongshi and Baoding dialects), Buyi, Shui, Dong, and Maonan.

Bulang	gloss	apparent source	Dai equiv.
khui ⁵¹ (Gantang)	'eggplant'	ku ² Mashan Zhuang	mak ⁹ xə ¹
kho ³⁵ (Gantang).	'neck'	ko ² Longzhou Zhuang	xo ²
?iat ⁵¹ (Pangpin)	'rest'	?i:it ⁷ Buyi	sau ² heŋ ²
duŋ (Man'e).	'stand'	duŋ ¹ Mashan Zhuang	tsun ⁵
mak ³¹ (Pangpin)	'chop'	mak ⁷ Yong Nan Tuyu, Yong'an, Sanjiang Zhuang	fan ²
?a? ³¹ (Man'e)	'able'	?ak ⁷ Wuming Zhuang	kat ⁸
kheu ³⁵ (Man'e)	'green'	kheu ¹ Longzhou Zhuang	
lɔk ³³ (Gantang)	'monkey'	nok ⁷ Tongshi Li	liŋ ²

(The initial Bulang consonant *l* corresponds to Li *n*.)

?u ⁵¹ (Pangpin)	'person'	?u ² ?aru ¹ Baoding Li	kun ²
khau ³³ (Gantang)	'enter'	khau ³ Longzhou Zhuang	xau ³
kho ⁵⁵ (Gantang)	'wait'	ka ³ Dong, Shui, Maonan	tha ³
khe ³⁵ (Man'e)	'do'	he ⁴ Shui	het ⁸

(The initial consonant *kh* is the ancient form of modern *h* in Shui.)

na ⁵⁵ (Gantang)	'eat'	na ⁴ Maonan	kin ¹
tap ¹³ (Pangpin)	'kick'	tap ⁸ Maonan	thi ⁴
lɔk ⁵⁵ (Gantang)	'black'	lɔk ⁷ Baoding Li	dam ¹

4. Kam-Tai loan-words in Khmu

The Khmu dialects cited include Manmai and Nanqian. The Kam-Tai sources include Zhuang (Wuming, Mashan, Longzhou dialects), Li, Shui, Dong, Mulao, and Maonan.

Khmu	gloss	apparent source	Dai equiv.
pliŋ (Manmai)	'leech'	pliŋ ¹ Wuming Zhuang	
ka (Nanqian)	'orphan'	ka ⁴ Mashan Zhuang	luk ³ kām ⁵ pha ⁴
khui (Nanqian)	'ride'	khui ⁵ Longzhou Zhuang	xi ⁵
plup (Nanqian)	'bamboo hat'	klap ⁷ Wuming Zhuang	
nak (Manmai)	'otter'	na:k ⁸ Longzhou Zhuang	bon ³
phai (Manmai)	'cotton'	phai ³ Longzhou Zhuang	
(ba?) paŋ (Nanqian)	'peach'	(tui ¹) paŋ ¹ Dong	mak ⁹ xəŋ ⁵
kām (Manmai)	'arrow'	kham ³ Dong	pun ¹
pān (Manmai)	'allot'	pan ¹ Zhuang	beŋ ⁵

kham (Manmai, Nanqian)	‘stride’	kha:m ³	Longzhou Zhuang	
mian (Nanqian)	‘be’	man ¹	Li	pin ¹
rap (Nanqian)	‘shoulder’	rap ⁷	Mashan Zhuang	hap ⁹
ŋəp (Nanqian)	‘close one’s eyes’	ŋəp	Dong Zhuang	lap ⁷
dip (Nanqian)	‘sew’	tip ⁷	Shui	jep ⁷
pəŋ (Nanqian)	‘shoot’	peŋ ⁵	Dong	ju ²
ten (Manmai)	‘trample’	tan ⁴	Shui	jem ⁶
kəm (Nanqian)	‘salty’	kim ²	Longzhou Zhuang	tsim ²
sət (Nanqiang)	‘wear’	tshat ⁷	Li	nuŋ ⁶
khep (Nanqian)	‘narrow’	kap ⁸	Wuming Zhuang	tsəm ⁴
ŋap (Manmai)	‘yawn’	ŋap ⁷	Maonan	hau ¹
lak (Manmai)	‘cheat’	luk ⁷	Mulao	jo ⁴

5. Conclusion

Three points may be noted concerning the Mon-Khmer words borrowed from Kam-Tai languages: (1) there is a large number of them; (2) they involve a wide range of languages (all of the Kam-Tai languages); (3) they retain a lot of ancient initial Tai-Kadai consonants and clusters, such as *g, d, kl, pl, ɣ, kh, r ...*

According to what we have shown above, we may reasonably conclude that Mon-Khmer peoples have moved widely in Kam-Tai areas (including Guangxi, Guangdong, Hainan, Hunan, Guizhou and Yunnan) in the past. They were in contact with the ancestors of Kam-Tai people whose offspring consist of such ethnic groups as the Zhuang, Buyi, Dai, Thai, Lao, Dong, Shui, Mulao, Maonan, Li, etc. today. The mutual contacts among these peoples must have led to the mutual influence among their languages.

In addition, we may also see traces of the evolution of some speech sounds in Kam-Tai, as Mon-Khmer languages retain many ancient words from Kam-Tai. For example, *h* or *x* in modern Kam-Tai, from ancient Kam-Tai **kh*, are pronounced *kh* in Mon:

Mon	Dai	Zhuang (Wuming)	Meaning
khěk	xuk ⁹	hek ⁷	‘guest’
kho ³⁵	xo ²	ho ²	‘neck’
kheu ³⁵	xeu ¹	heu ¹	‘green’
khau ³³	xau ³	hau ³	‘enter’
khui	xi ⁵	--	‘ride’
kham	xam ³	ham ³	‘stride’

Mon-Khmer languages have *h* or *x* in their own phonological systems, which they could have used in the words borrowed from Kam-Tai languages. The reason why they used *kh* instead of *h* or *x* may be that the words borrowed from Kam-Tai languages had a *kh* initial consonant but not *h* or *x* in ancient times.

Accordingly, we may infer that the course of evolution of **kh* in Kam-Tai was: *kh*→*x/h*. This gives us an important law of speech development in Kam-Tai languages, i.e, the aspirated velar plosive may fricativize in the course of its evolution.

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