

**The Role of Endangered Mon-Khmer Languages of  
Xekong Province  
Southern Laos in the Reconstruction of Proto-Katuic**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Katuic languages spoken in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia have been classified into two sub-branches, East and West Katuic (Thomas, 1976; Diffloth, 1992 and 1996). According to Diffloth (1996), West Katuic comprises a few languages which can be divided into two complexes namely Kuay and Bru, East Katuic comprises many more languages: Pacoh, Katu, Phu'o'ng, Kantu, Ngkriang, Katang, Ong, Yir and Ta'ohi. Proto-East-Katuic was reconstructed by D.M. Thomas (1976) based on the Brou, Pacoh and Katu data collected by *SIL members working in Vietnam*. A lack of data in the past and the Romanized-Vietnamese-script transcription make her Proto-East-Katuic phonological reconstruction and comparative lexicon (667 items) look less impressive. Even though there are some weaknesses, we still feel thankful for her pioneer work; this first attempt is a good start for the rest to come. From 1976 to the present, there have been three more works on Proto-Katuic: Diffloth (1982), Efimov (1983), and Peiros (1996). The book *Katuic Comparative Dictionary* by Peiros appeared in 1996 with short phonological descriptions of Bru, Kui, Pacoh, Katu, and Proto-Katuic phonological reconstruction in the introductory section, followed by 1,241 reconstructed forms and the index of Proto-Katuic roots respectively. The dictionaries of Katuic languages: Bru (L-Thongkum and Puengpa, 1980), Brou (J.Miller and C.Miller, 1976), Kui (Srivises, 1978), Pacoh (R.Watson, S.Watson and Cubuat, 1979), and Katu (Costello, 1971) were his major sources of data.

From January 1997-December 1999, I had the opportunity to do field research on six Katuic and seven Bahnaic languages

in the four districts (Lamam, Thataeng, Dakchueng, Kaluem) of Xekong province, southern Laos. Nine field trips were conducted, about two-three weeks for each trip.<sup>1</sup> Based on the *Kui (Suai)-Thai-English Dictionary* by Srivises (1978), a wordlist of 2,228 lexical items had been prepared to be used as a guideline for data collection in Xekong. For each of the six Katuic languages: Kantu, Dakkang, Triw, Ta-oi', Chatong, Kriang, about 2,500-3,000 items were obtained depending upon the efficiency of the informants. The data from my fieldnotes together with information extracted from the other available publications, mentioned above, enabled me to classify and reconstruct another version of Proto-Katuic. One aim of this study was to test the validity and accuracy of the works done by professional comparativists, especially Peiros' Proto-Katuic, which is the most extensive. It is noticeable that there are a lot of discrepancies between his version and this study due to the fact that the reconstructions are based on different sets of data. Some of the differences may have been caused by the selection of daughter languages to represent the whole branch of the family. The linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the comparativists, themselves, are also important, especially for an interpretation of the language data transcribed by other linguists and field workers. The selection of cognates can also be a problem. A large number of words with cultural significance may not be taken into consideration due to a lack of SEA cultural knowledge, in general, and the cultures of the people who speak the languages used for a reconstruction, in particular. An opportunity to hear the languages spoken in everyday life is also useful. Even though our works were done only four years apart, and the same Bru and Kui dictionaries were used extensively as references for cognates, the differences between Peiros' version and this study's are quite major. See examples in the next sections.

## SUB-GROUPING OF KATUIC LANGUAGES

From the data in the wordlists of the six Katuic languages spoken in Xekong province collected solely by me: Ta-oi', Kriang, Chatong, Kantu, Dakkang and Triw, and data from the

other sources on Kui (Srivises, 1978; Gainey, 1985), Bru (L-Thongkum and Puengpa, 1980; Gainey, 1985), So (Gainey, 1985), Brou (Miller, 1976), Pacoh (Watson, 1979), and Katu (Costello, 1971 and 1991; Sulavan et al, 1998), about 1,650 cognates could be found; however, only 1,500 were selected for this Proto-Katuic reconstruction.

According to the Katuic family tree drawn by Diffloth (1989), cited in Chazée (1999) with no other details, there are three sub-branches of the Katuic languages, East (Katu, Pacoh, Ngkriang), Central (Ta'oy, Ong, Katang), and West (Brou-so, Kuay-Yoe), see Figure 1. Based on research results, the speakers of the Kui-Kuai or Kuay-Yoe sub-group of the West Katuic sub-branch separated themselves from the rest of the Katuic peoples by migrating to the west (Thailand and Cambodia) earlier than the Bru-So sub-group. Among those that remain in the east (Laos and Vietnam), their languages may be classified into three sub-groups: North (Brou, Pacoh, So, etc.), Central (Ta-oi', Kriang, Chatong, etc.), and South (Kantu, Katu, Dakkang, Triw, etc.)<sup>2</sup> See the diagram showing the sub-grouping and relationship of the Katuic languages in Figure 2.

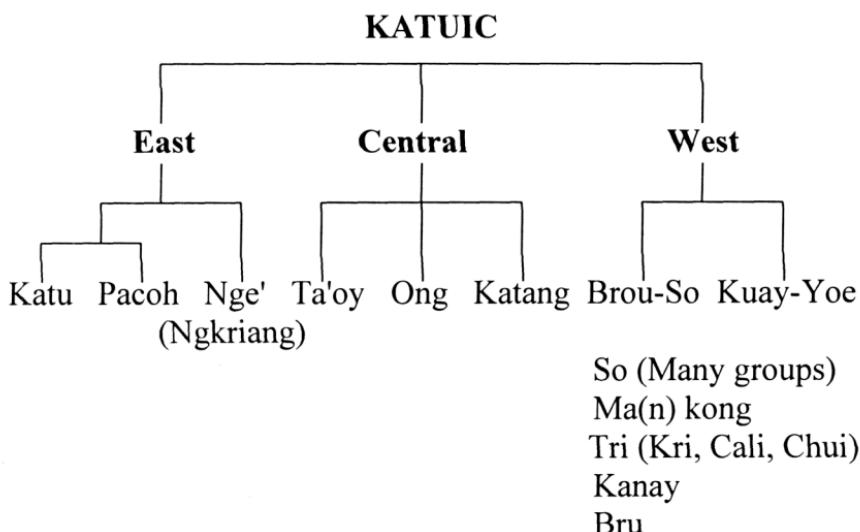


Figure 1. The Katuic branch of Eastern Mon-Khmer (Diffloth, 1989) as cited in Chazée (1999)

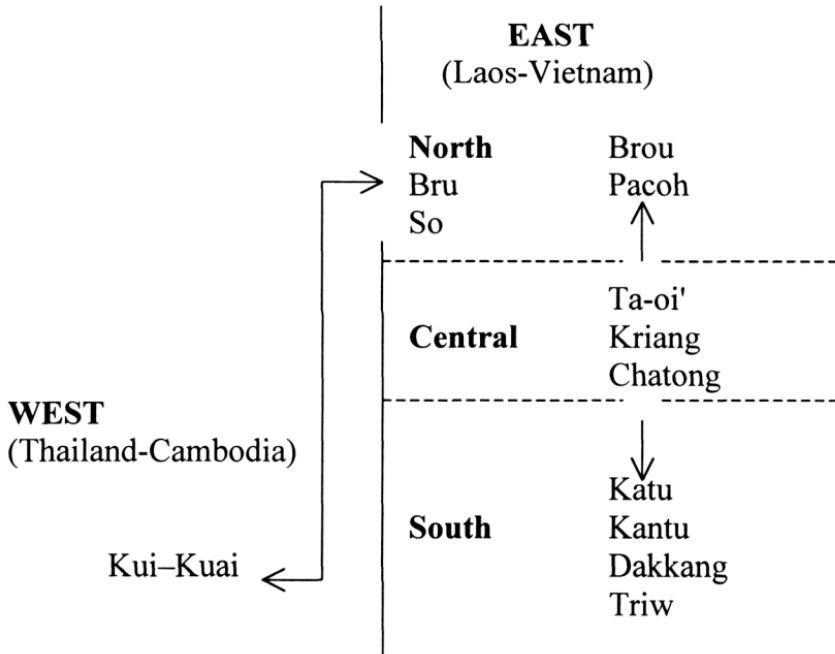


Figure 2. Sub-grouping of Katuic languages (L-Thongkum, 2000)

Some examples from the comparative lexicon below are evidence that proves the hypothesis that the Katuic languages can be classified into four major sub-groups: West Katuic, North East Katuic, Central East Katuic, and South East Katuic.

- (1)           \*(s/h)ər?maŋ/\*(k/?)ər?maŋ (East) ແມ່ນໍ້າວ ທ່າກໍຍ່າ  
soot' Peiros: \*sərmhaŋ~\*kəmhaŋ  
West: kɔ:m (Kui)  
East: samaŋ (Bru Brou So) kamaŋ (Pacoh)  
                  karmaŋ (Ta-oi') harmaŋ (Chatong)  
                  ?armaŋ (Kantu Triw) ramaŋ (Katu) tamaŋ (Dakkang)
- (2)           \*(k/?)əta:w (East) ອ້ອະ sugarcane'  
Peiros: \*kəta:w~\*?əta:w  
West: katu:m (Kui)

- East: kata:w (Bru Ta-oi' Kriang Dakkang Triw)  
 kuta:w (Bru) ?ata:w (Pacoh Kantu Katu)  
 ta:w (Chatong)
- (3) \***(p/?)əlu:j** (East) 'ນໍາຫີ່ນ bottle gourd'  
 Peiros: \*?əlhuəj  
 West: ?əne:t~nə:t (Kui)
- East: ?əluəj (Bru) ?aluoj (Brou) ?əluj (Kantu Katu) palu:j (Dakkang Triw) lu:j (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang)
- (4) \***?ɒ:c** (East) 'ພອນ thin, skinny' Peiros: ?a:j?  
 West: takŋam (Kui)
- East: ?ɒ:c (Chatong Kriang Kantu Katu) ?ɒ:j?  
 (Pacoh Ta-oi') ?ɒ:j? (Bru) ?ɔ:j? (Brou)  
 ?ɒ:k (Dakkang) ?aok (Triw)
- (5) \***təkal** (East) 'ວຸນ muddy, murky'  
 Peiros: \*təkal~\*təka:l  
 West: la?ɒ:? (Kui)
- East: takal (Bru Chatong Katu) tikal (Pacoh Kantu Triw) tajkal (Dakkang) takul (Kriang) takŋl (Ta-oi') takŋl (Brou)
- (6) \***təluk** (East) 'ເມັນ ນມອນ cloud, fog' Peiros: \*dəlu?  
 West: lamŋl (Kui)
- East: taluk (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang) tiluk (Triw) talŋ? (Bru) tuluk (Pacoh) daluk (Katu) tilŋk (Kantu)
- (7) \***?əsuom** (West, N.East); \***?ənŋəm** (C.East, S.East) 'ຖົງ shrimp' Peiros: \*?əsuəm~\*həsuəm  
 West, N.East: kasu:m (Kui) ?aso:m (Pacoh)  
 ?asuəm (Bru So) ?asuəm (Brou)

- (8) C.East, S.East: **តែចង** (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang  
Kantu Dakkang)  
**\*(-)អេកេ:ឃ** (West, N.East); **\*តោរវេ:ឃ** (C.East,  
S.East) **ពិខាង** waist Peiros: **\*ហេងកេ:ឃ**  
 West, N.East: **ឯកេ:ឃ** (Kui) **ឯគិ:ឃ** (Bru So)  
 C.East, S.East: **តោរវិ:ឃ** (Kriang) **ត្រោវិ:ឃ** (Ta-oi')  
**តោរវេ:ឃ** (Kantu) **តោរវេ:ឃ**  
 (Chatong Dakkang)

(9) \***កោតាហ** (West, N.East); \***?តោទ** (C.East, S.East)  
**ថ្នូន** (រំភោកាយ ណេដ) hot (body, sunlight)'  
 Peiros: \* [k/g]ətaw~\*[k/g]əta:w  
 West, N.East: kataw (Kui Bru) kautaw (Brou  
So) kitaw (Pacoh)  
 C.East, S.East: **តុ?** (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang)  
**?តុ?** (Dakkang Triw) **?តុ?**  
 (Kantu)

(10) \***កៅនុនុប** (West, N.East, C.East); \***?អោនុលាង**  
 (S.East) **ថីន** other, another'  
 Peiros: \***kənhah~\*hənhah**  
 West, N.East, C.East: **នុប** (Kui) kanph (Bru So)  
**Ta-oi')** kannph (Chatong  
Kriang) kannph (Pacoh)  
 S.East: **?ាលាង** (Dakkang) **?ិនាង** (Triw) **?ិលាង**  
 (Kantu)

(11) \***តាគ** (West, N.East, C.East); \***?នាំម** (S.East)  
**ឈ្មោះក** iron' Peiros: **\*ta:?**  
 West, N.East, C.East: **តុ?** (Kui Pacoh Ta-oi'  
 Chatong Kriang) **តាគ**  
 (Bru So)

S.East: **នាំម** (Kantu Dakkang Triw)  
 (12) \***តោ?លាខ** (West, N.East); \***ហេមប្លាគ** (C.East);  
**\*ប្រាគ** (S.East) **បីវី** (កត្តុយ) bunch of bananas'  
 Peiros: \***dəlhah~\*yəlhah**

- West, N.East: lah (Kui) talah (Bru Brou So)  
tallah (Pacoh)
- C.East: hampλk (Ta-oi') lλk (Chatong Kriang)
- S.East: pλn (Dakkang Triw) pa:n (Kantu)
- (13) \*(-)əmplθ (West, N.East); \*təmbli:n (C.East);  
\*təmla:n (S.East) 'ஏற்று தெளிவாகி' to turn over'
- Peiros: \*pəlhah~\*yəlhah
- West, N.East: mplθ (Kui) palθ (Bru) pilθ  
(Pacoh)
- C.East: kabli:n (Ta-oi') tampli:n (Chatong)  
təmple:n (Kriang)
- S.East: təmla:n (Kantu) tala:n/pala:n (Dakkang)

In comparison with the other North East Katuic languages, Bru and So seem to share more cognates with Kui, which is a West Katuic language. Among the Central Katuic languages, Ta-oi' has a number of phonological and lexical elements which are the characteristics of North East Katuic languages. Geography might have been the cause of old borrowings, since the homeland of the Ta-oi', "Mueang Ta-oi" in Salavan province, is close to that of the Bru-So. As for the Chatong, since the population is very small (about 580), and their villages are scattered in the Kriang and Katu speaking areas, they have to use Kriang or Katu for social activities, therefore, language contact cannot be avoided. This makes Ta-oi' and Chatong look like the bridges between the North East and Central East, and the South East and Central East subgroups respectively. The North East Katuic evidence in Ta-oi' and South East Katuic in Chatong is illustrated in the following examples:

- (14) \*bλn (N.East); \*bi:n (C.East, S.East); 'full'  
Peiros: \*bejn~\*bijn
- N.East: bλn (Pacoh) pλn (Bru) pλn (Brou)
- C.East: pλn (Ta-oi') pi:n (Chatong Kriang)
- S.East: bijn (Kantu Katu) bi:n (Dakkang Triw)

- (15) \*kənci:k (N.East); \*ca:s (C.East, S.East); ໜົວ (n.)  
 to comb' Peiros: \*[h/s] ənci:?~\*kəci:?  
 N.East: nci:? (Bru) nci:k (Brou) kəci:k (Pacoh)  
 C.East: kaci:k (Ta-oi') ca:jh (Chatong Kriang)  
 S.East: ca:s (Kantu) ca:† (Dakkang) ca:jh (Triw)
- (16) \*kəmbək (N.East); \*təndu:k (C.East, S.East);  
 'ສນອງ ມັນສນອງ brain'  
 Peiros: \*kəm?bə?~\*[s/?]ə?bə?  
 N.East: kubə?~kumbə?(Bru) ?abək (So Brou)  
 ?abok (Pacoh)  
 C.East: bu:? (Ta-oi') tartuk (Chatong) ?andu:k  
 (Kriang)  
 S.East: ?aduak (Kantu) nduk (Dakkang) tardu:k  
 (Triw)
- (17) \*rɔ:c (N.East, C.East); \*lo:ŋ (S.East); 'ໄສ້ ລໍາໄສ້  
 intestines' Peiros: \*ruqj?  
 N.East: ruaj? (Bru) ruaj? (Brou) rɔ:j? (Pacoh)  
 ruac (So)  
 C.East: rɔ:j? (Ta-oi') rɔ:c (Kriang) lu:əŋ  
(Chatong)  
 S.East: loŋ (Kantu) lu:əŋ (Dakkang Triw)
- (18) \*təpeh (N. East, C.East); \*blɔ:(S.East);  
 'ເຕາ fireplace' Peiros: \*təpeh  
 N.East: tapeh (Bru Brou) tueh (Pacoh)  
 C.East: tapeh (Ta-oi' Kriang) plp: (Chatong)  
 S.East: blɔ: (Kantu Dakkang Triw)
- (19) \*du:c (N.East, C.East); \*təntoŋ (S.East); 'ດັກ  
 ຫຼາຍ to steal' Peiros: \*duoj?~\*tuoj?  
 N.East: tuəj? (Bru) tuəc (So) tuoj (Brou) to:j?  
 (Pacoh)  
 C.East: to:j? (Ta-oi') tu:c (Kriang) tatoŋ (Chatong)  
 S.East: toŋ (Kantu) tɔŋ (Dakkang) tatoŋ (Triw)

## RECONSTRUCTION OF PROTO-KATUIC

A large number of the reconstructed forms in the present study can be regarded as additions to the previous reconstructions of Proto-Katuic, especially the one by Peiros, since these items have never been reconstructed before. They are basic vocabulary as well as cultural lexicon, see (20)-(40).

- (20)      \*pərnī:s 'ນີ້ກວາດ broom' Peiros: -  
panī:h (Ta-oi') parni:h (Chatong Kriang) parni:s  
(Kantu) parni:t (Dakkang) pirni:h (Triw)
- (21)      \*hō:m 'ອານ (ນໍາ) to bathe' Peiros: -  
hō:m (Ta-oi' Chatong Kantu Dakkang Triw)  
h̥y:m (Kriang)
- (22)      \*təhu(:)m 'ຫອມ fragrant, scented' Peiros: -  
tahu:m (Ta-oi' Kriang) tahum (Chatong Dakkang  
Triw) tihum (Kantu)
- (23)      \*bər̥ŋna: 'ຮວຍ rich, wealthy' Peiros: -  
parŋna: (Ta-oi' Kriang Dakkang) barŋna: (Kantu)  
birŋna: (Triw) parŋna: (Chatong)
- (24)      \*ti:r 'ຕະແກຮງວາງຂອງເໜືອເຕາໄຟ rack above a fire-  
place' Peiros: -  
ti:r (Ta-oi' Chatong Kantu Dakkang Triw)
- (25)      \*kraw 'ເນື່ອ (ປາຄ) ດ້ວຍພື້ນໜົດທັງໝົດ to poison fish with  
a kind of plant' Peiros: -  
kraw (Ta-oi' Chatong Kantu Dakkang Triw)  
kərraw (Kriang)
- (26)      \*təm̥ba:r '2 ນິ້ມື້ອ (ຄວາມກ່ວາງ) unit of measure (the  
width of the index and middle fingers when held  
together)' Peiros: -  
ka?ba:r (Ta-oi') təm̥ba:r (Kriang Dakkang) tapa:r  
(Chatong)

- (27) \***tampε** '3 นิ้วมือ (ความกว้าง) unit of measure (the width of the index, middle, and ring fingers when held together)' Peiros: -  
 kampe: (Ta-oi') tampe: (Kriang Dakkang) tape: (Chatong)
- (28) \***tampuon** '4 นิ้วมือ (ความกว้าง) unit of measure (the width of the index, middle, ring and little fingers when held together)' Peiros: -  
 kampuan (Ta-oi') tampu:ən (Kriang Dakkang)  
 tampu:ən (Chatong)
- (29) \*(s/h)əba:k '5 นิ้วมือ/ฝ่ามือ (ความกว้าง) unit of measure (hand-width)' Peiros: -  
 sapak (Chatong) hapak (Kriang)
- (30) \***kəpuat** 'กำนอน (นิ้วโป้งทุบ) unit of measure (a fist with closed thumb)' Peiros: \***kəpuət** 'hold in fist, clench'  
 kapuat (Ta-oi' Kriang) kapu:ət (Chatong Triw)  
 karpə:t (Kantu)
- (31) \*(c/k)əpə:l 'กำตั้ง (นิ้วโป้งซึ้ง) unit of measure (a fist with spread thumb)' Peiros: -  
 cəpə:l (Kriang Triw) cipə:l (Kantu) kappə:l (Chatong) tappə:l (Dakkang) kapa:l (Ta-oi')
- (32) \***cəbe:/cəbo:** 'คีบ (ปลายนิ้วกลาง-ปลายนิ้วโป้ง) unit of measure (from the tip of the middle finger to the tip of the thumb with fingers spread apart)' Peiros: -  
 cabe: (Chatong Kriang) cibe: (Kantu) hade: (Ta-oi') cabō: (Dakkang) cabow (Triw)
- (33) \***cəda:** 'คีบ (ปลายนิ้วก้อย-ปลายนิ้วโป้ง) unit of measure (from the tip of the little finger to the tip of the thumb with fingers spread apart)' Peiros: \*cədia~\* [t/d]ə?dia

hada: (Ta-oi') sata: (Chatong) cata: (Kriang) cida: (Kantu) cada: (Dakkang Triw Katu) tida: (Pacoh) satja (Bru Kui)

- (34) \*kə?lanj/\*?əha:nj 'គោក (ខែគោក-ខែមីោ) unit of measure (from the elbow to the wrist)' Peiros: -  
ka?lanj (Ta-oi') kallaŋ (Kriang) ?aha:nj (Dakkang) ?iha:nj (Triw)
- (35) \*tərnūm/\*(t/k)əpom 'គោក (ខែគោក-ត្រាយមីោកា) unit of measure (from the elbow to the knuckles of the fist)' Peiros: -  
tarnūm (Chatong Kriang) tranum (Ta-oi') tarnym (Kantu) kapom (Dakkang) tapom (Triw)
- (36) \*klat/\*kapaj 'គោក (ខែគោក-ត្រាយនីវកតានមីោបេ) unit of measure (from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger with open hand)' Peiros: -  
klat (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu) kapaj (Dakkang Triw)
- (37) \*-əmtu:p/\*(c/k)ə?lə:k 'ថែងខេន (ត្រាយនីវកតាន-រក្សារ៉ីខោង  
ដើមាក់នា) unit of measure (armspan, from the tip of the middle finger to the armpit of the same arm)' Peiros: -  
hatu:p (Chatong) pamtu:p (Kriang) pitu:p(Kantu)  
tu:p (Ta-oi') kalv:k (Dakkang) calv:k (Triw)
- (38) \*cɔ:r pʌ:m/\*cɔ:r lʌ:m 'ថែងខេន (ត្រាយនីវកតាន-កតានអក) unit of measure (armspan, from the tip of the middle finger to the middle of the chest)' Peiros: -  
cɔ:r pʌ:m (Ta-oi' Kriang) Note: pʌ:m 'ឃាត heart'  
cɔ:r lʌ:m (Chatong Kantu) Note: lʌ:m 'ពុំ liver'
- (39) \*ʃa:nj cak 'ថែងខេន (ត្រាយនីវកតាន-រក្សារ៉ីកខោងណ៍ះ) unit of measure (armspan, from the tip of the middle finger to the other armpit)' Peiros : -

?jaŋ cak (Kriang Kantu) Note: ?jaŋ 'ข้าง side'  
cak 'ลำตัว body'

caŋ cak (Triw) Note: caŋ 'ข้าง side'

- (40) \***(m/ʔə)jlaŋ/\*(m/ʔə)jtaŋ** 'ວາ unit of measure (arm-span, measured by extending both arms)'  
 Peiros: \*?**əzəŋ~\*həzəŋ~\*?****əzəŋ~\*[h/s]əmziəŋ**  
**caŋ** (Ta-oi' Kriang) **maclaŋ** (Chatong) **?aclaŋ**  
 (Kantu) **macu:əŋ** (Dakkang) **cu:əŋ** (Triw)  
**?acəŋ** (Brou) **?acəŋ** (Pacoh) **cuaŋ** (Katu) **cnŋ**  
 (Kui) **?acŋŋ** (Bru So)

In some cases, I could reconstruct more and/or different forms of the same roots as those reconstructed by Peiros. For example, as a native speaker of Thai who is also familiar with Mon-Khmer languages, I know that at least four words, អតុន /lǔm/, រូ /ru:/, ចំង /chõŋ/, and ព្រោង /phroŋ/ meaning 'hole, cavity' must be included in the wordlist for the Xekong project. Because of this awareness, three words in the Katuic languages could be elicited and reconstructed, \*bruŋ 'អតុន pit, big hole in the ground'; \*həmboŋ 'ឬ, ចំង small hole, aperture'; \*hərdroŋ 'ព្រោង hollow, big cavity (in a tree)', whereas Peiros has reconstructed only one Proto-Katuic root, see (41)-(43). More and/or different etymons can be found in (44)-(48).

- (41) \***bruŋ** 'អតុន pit, big hole in the ground'  
 Peiros: \***tərəŋ~\*pəruŋ**  
**pruŋ** (Ta-oi' Chatong Brou Pacoh Katu) **pruŋ** (Bru So) **pruŋ** (Kriang Kui) **pruŋ** (Kantu)
- (42) \***həmboŋ** 'ឬ ចំង small hole' Peiros: \***tərəŋ~\*pəruŋ**  
**kahboŋ** (Chatong) **həŋ** (Kriang) **həŋ** (Bru)  
**mbəŋ~?əmbəŋ** (Kantu) **bəŋ** (Dakkang Triw)
- (43) \***hərdroŋ** 'ព្រោង hollow, cavity (in a tree)'  
 Peiros: \***tərəŋ~\*pəruŋ**

troŋ (Ta-oi') hartuŋ (Chatong Kriang) ?ardun (Kantu) taroŋ (Dakkang) diroŋ (Triw) trɔŋ (Bru) tonŋ (Pacoh) drɔŋ (katu)

- (44) \*maj 'ເມັງ ອຸນ ທ່ານ ເຊິ້ນ ມື້ງ you' Peiros: \*?ətɔ:~\*hətɔ:  
maj (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw Kantu) maj (Kui So) mAj (Bru) ?atɔ: (Brou) to: (Pacoh)
- (45) \*du:r 'ຈູ່ເຫົາ cobra' Peiros: \*-dərəh~\*dərə?  
tu:r (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang Triw Brou Pacoh) tu:r (Bru) tʊ:r (Kui) tʊ:l (So)
- (46) \*kədi? 'ປຶ້ນ to squeeze'  
Peiros: \*[s/c]ətiet~\*kətiet; \*[s/c]əlhiʌn~\*pəlhiʌn  
ka?di? (Ta-oi') kadi? (Chatong Kriang Kantu) cadī? (Triw) di? (Dakkang Pacoh Katu)
- (47) \*cəpru:c 'ຄົ້ນ to squeeze (juice)'  
Peiros: \*[s/c]ətiet~\*kətiet; \*[s/c]əlhiʌn~\*pəlhiʌn  
capu:c (Chatong) cipu:c (Kantu) pru:c (Dakkang Triw)
- (48) \*hu:t 'ຢາເສັນ ຢາສູນ tobacco' Peiros: \*χəhə:t  
hu:t (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang Triw Pacoh) hꝝ:t (Bru) hꝝ:wit (Brou)

A lot of the roots that were reconstructed by Peiros look very complex and at the same time have many variants. The fresh field data from Xekong has helped clarify some of the dubious cases. See (49)-(52).

- (49) \*(kə)?ləŋ 'ເຫຼືອກ gums'  
Peiros: \*kələŋ~\*gəlhəŋ ~\*hə[l/lh]əŋ  
ləŋ (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang) ləŋ (Triw) laŋ (Katu) kləŋ (Pacoh)
- (50) \*kəndəh 'ຕີ (ເຫັດືກ) to forge (iron)'  
Peiros: \* [k/g]ətəjh~\* [h/s]əntəjh~\*χətəjh

dəh (Kantu Dakkang) dəh-didəh (Triw) təh (Ta-oi') kətəh (Brou) təh (So) nteh (Kui) təh (Chatong Kriang)

- (51) \*pərdəph 'ແຕດ ຮະເບີດ to burst, to explode'  
 Peiros: \*[p/b]ə?dah~[h/y]ə?dah~\*pətah~\*bədah  
 pa?dph (Ta-oi') padph (Triw Bru So Brou Pacoh)  
 pidph (Kantu) pardph (Dakkang) badph (Kui)  
 partph (Chatong) patph (Katu)
- (52) \*təgə:l 'ແປດ eight'  
 Peiros: \*dəgual~\*[h/y]əgual~\*təgual  
 takp:l (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw  
 Katu) tikp:l (Kantu Pacoh) takual (Kui Bru So)

Forty-one prefixes were reconstructed by Peiros without giving their meaning and function. In fact, pre-syllables in disyllabic words, prefixes, and infixes are all listed together under "prefixes". See (53)-(58). He also reconstructed "prefixes" in quite a number of forms (disyllabic, etc.) which should be monosyllabic in Proto-Katuic, especially the ones that have \*CC- initials. In fact, consonant clusters Cr- and Cl- are common phonological features in Mon-Khmer languages. See (59)-(66).

- (53) \*pluh > \*pəlluh ເປັນ (ໄມ້ຈາງ) >ໄມ້ຈາງ to blow >  
 blowpipe' Peiros: \*pərluh~\*[b]əlah 'blowgun'  
 ?uh (v.) > paluh (n.) (Ta-oi')  
 pluh (v.) > palluh (n.) (Chatong Kriang  
 Dakkang Triw)  
 pləh (v.) > palləh (n.) (Kantu)
- (54) \*ca:s > \*cərnə:s ແວິ (ນ.) > ແວິ (ນ.) to comb > a comb'  
 Peiros: -  
 ca:s (v.) > cina:s (n.) (Kantu)  
 ca:t (v.) > cara:t (n.) (Dakkang)  
 ca:jh (v.) > cana:jh (n.) (Chatong Kriang)  
 ca:jh (v.) > carra:jh (n.) (Triw)

- (55) \*pεŋ > \*pənεŋ ຫັງ (ຫນ້າໄມ້) > ຫນ້າໄມ້ to shoot (crossbow) > crossbow' Peiros: \*χερεŋ 'to shoot'; \*təmianŋ 'crossbow'  
pεŋ (v.) > panεŋ (n.) (Chatong Kriang Dakkang)  
pεŋ (v.) > pineŋ (n.) (Kantu)  
pεŋ (v.) > panεŋ (n.) (Triw)

(56) \*do:m > \*pəndo:m 'ຖຸກ' > ນົມ ripe > to ripen (fruit)' Peiros : -  
do:m (adj.) > padom (v.) (Ta-oi')  
tø:m (adj.) > pato:m (v.) (Chatong)  
do:m (adj.) > pando:m (v.) (Kriang)  
dom (adj.) > pandom (v.) (Kantu)  
dum (adj.) > pandum (v.) (Dakkang Triw)

(57) \*ju:r > \*paju:r 'ຈຸກ' > ປຸກ to get up > to wake someone up' Peiros: -  
ju:r (int.v.) > paju:r (tr.v.) (Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang Triw)  
jo:r (int.v.) > pajo:r (tr.v.) (Ta-oi')  
Note: jゅ: (Kui) ju:r (Bru)

(58) \*kap > \*tərkap 'ກັດ' > ກັດກັນ to bite > to bite each other' Peiros: \*kap 'to bite'  
kap > tərkap (Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang Triw)  
kam? > tərkam? (Ta-oi')

(59) \*plan 'ຫຼູກາ thatchgrass' Peiros: pəlhan  
plan (Ta-oi') Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang Triw Bru So Pacoh Kui)

(60) \*prak 'ເສີນ silver' Peiros: \* [p/b]ərha?  
pra? (Ta-oi') Chatong Kriang Kantu Pacoh Bru Kui) prak (Dakkang Triw) prəa? (Brou) para? (So)

- (61) \***blu:k** 'ໜອນ grey (of hair)' Peiros: \***pəlua?**  
 plu:k (Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw Katu)  
 plu?: (Ta-oi' Kui) pluak (Brou) plua? (Pacoh)  
 pluək (So) plua? (Bru)
- (62) \***kla:jn** 'ຕັກ ສານ to braid, to plait'  
 Peiros: \***kəlha:jn~\*pəlha:jn**  
 kla:jn (Ta-oi' Pacoh Chatong Kriang Kantu  
 Dakkang Triw) klan (Bru Brou)
- (63) \***bra:j** 'ຕ້າຍ thread' Peiros: \***pəria:j~\*[h/s]əmria:j**  
 pra:j (Ta-oi' Chatong Pacoh) praj (Kriang) bra:j  
 (Dakkang) mra:j (Katu) priaj (Kui) bara:j (Triw)  
 para:j (Kantu) pari:j (Bru So)
- (64) \***jri:** 'ໄຫຮ banyan tree' Peiros: \***?əri:**  
 cri: (Chatong) cri: (Kriang Dakkang) ri: (Ta-oi')  
 rirej (Kantu) ?iri: (Pacoh) cirij: (So) ?ari: (Bru)
- (65) \*(**?ən)dren** 'ໄຄນ (ແມດງ) body louse, crab louse'  
 Peiros: \***dərij~\*dərhəjn~\*tərəjn**  
 ntren (Ta-oi' Chatong) ntren (Brou Pacoh) ntren  
 (Kriang) ntrij (So Kui) ntrij (Bru) tarej  
 (Dakkang) tarej (Triw) ?arej (Kantu) taraj  
 (Katu)
- (66) \***gre:j** 'ແກ່ (ຜຄໄມ້) mature (of fruit)'  
 Peiros: \***kəriəj~\*dəriəj** 'ripe'  
 kre:j (Ta-oi' Pacoh) kre:j (Kui) kri:j (Kriang  
 Dakkang Triw) kre:j (Chatong) kri:j (Bru So)  
 kərriəj (Kantu)

Concerning the Proto-Katuic phonological system, the differences between the Peiros' and the present version are not as major. Some of the discrepancies are caused by different choices of phonetic symbols to represent significant Proto-Katuic segments, consonants and vowels. Peiros reconstructed seven "aspirated initials", all of which are sonorants (\*mh, \*nh,

\*jh, \*ŋh, \*wh, \*lh, \*rh); however, aspirated plosives were not reconstructed. His choice is rather unusual. I think that preglottalized sonorants, \*?m, \*?n, \*?ŋ, \*?ŋ, \*?w, \*?l and \*?r seem to be more convincing than aspirated sonorants, since \*?b, \*?d and \*?j are ones of his reconstructed initial consonants. As for final consonants, instead of \*-s, \*-c, and \*-k which are common finals in Mon-Khmer languages, he reconstructed them as \*-jh, \*-j?, and \*-?, respectively. See (67)-(75).

- (67)      \*tə?mɒ:j 'ແມັກ ຄນແປລກໜ້າ guest, stranger  
                 Peiros: \*təmha:j~\*kəmha:j  
                 kampɔj (Kui) təmɒ:j (Bru Chatong Kriang Triw Katu) tamɒ:j (Pacoh) timɒ:j (Kantu) tamɔ:j (Brou) tamaw (Dakkang)
- (68)      \*tə?no:l 'ເສາ post, pole' Peiros: \*tənhɔ:l  
                 tanɔ:l (Bru Kui) tano:l (Pacoh Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw) tanu:l (So) tanoul (Brou) tanɔ:l (Kantu) tanʌl-tanɔ:l (Katu)
- (69)      \*kə?laŋ: 'ເຫື່ອວ hawk' Peiros: \*kəlha:ŋ  
                 kəlaŋ: (Kui Bru So Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw)
- (70)      \*kə?rɒk 'ວ້າ cow, ox' Peiros: \*dərha?~\*kərha?  
                 karok (Chatong Dakkang Katu) karrɒk (Kriang Kantu Triw) karro? (Pacoh)
- (71)      \*kədu:k/\*kədɤk 'ຝຶກ squash, white gourd'  
                 Peiros: \*kə?di?  
                 du:k (Ta-oi' Kriang) kadu:k (Pacoh) kadɤk (Dakkang Triw Katu So) ?adɤk (Kantu) kadu? (Brou Kui) kadʌw? (Bru)
- (72)      \*buac 'ດ້າງ (ໜ້າ) to wash (face)' Peiros: \*?bu[a/ɔ]j?  
                 buac (Kriang Katu) puac (Chatong) bu:a:c (Dakkang Triw) bo:c (Kantu) buaj? (Ta-oi') buaj? (Pacoh)

- (73) \***kəhuac** ជូរការ to whistle  
 Peiros: \*gəhə:j?~\*həhə:j?  
 kahuac (Chatong Kriang Katu) kahu:ac  
 (Dakkang) cihu:ac (Triw) kaho:c (Kantu) kahō:c  
 (Kui) kuho:c (So) kuho:j? (Bru) kuhu:j?  
 (Brou) kahaj? (Pacoh)
- (74) \***?as** បាន ុំ inflamed, swollen' Peiros: \*?εjh  
 ?as (Kantu Brou Pacoh) ?a:t (Dakkang) ?ajh (Ta-  
 oi' Triw) ?ājh (Bru) ?ah (Kui) ?eh (Katu) ?a?eh  
 (Kriang)
- (75) \***kəpa:s** ផ្លាម cotton plant  
 Peiros: \*kəpa;jh~\*həpa;jh  
 kapas (Kantu) kapat (Dakkang) kapajh (Ta-oi'  
 Chatong Kriang Triw Katu) kupajh (Bru) pa;jh  
 (Pacoh) ?apajh (So) kapa:h (Kui)

It is noticeable that both Peiros and I have reconstructed \*ə in all pre-syllables. However, the \*ə stands for different solutions. His \*ə should represent /ɤ/, since his reconstructed central vowels are \*i, \*i:, \*ə, \*ə:, \*ʌ, \*ʌ:, \*a, \*a:. In this study, it is assumed that Proto-Katuic pre-syllables could have one of \*i, \*a, or \*u which have been retained sporadically in the daughter languages. I have therefore reconstructed \*ə as a tentative vowel because it is rather impossible to pin point exactly which of the three vowels it represents. Thus, the \*ə here only suggests "a kind of unstressed or reduced vowel" in Proto-Katuic prefixes, infixes and pre-syllables. As for diphthongs, based on a lot of fresh data, the current reconstruction of Proto-Katuic diphthongs is less complex than those proposed by Peiros.

In conclusion, the endangered Katuic languages of Xekong province have contributed a great deal to the reconstruction of Proto-Katuic as can be seen in the seventy-five examples given in this paper. The comparativists' different linguistic and cultural backgrounds seem to cause a lot of differences

between the two versions of Proto-Katuic. Perhaps, we need another reconstruction of Proto-Katuic when more fresh field data from southern Laos and southern Vietnam are available. Let us hope that the discrepancies will be minimized.

## DISCUSSION

Besides presenting some aspects of Proto-Katuic phonology and lexicon, I have also tried to point out a few things which might be useful to young linguists who would like to be professional comparativists in the future.

Firstly, knowledge of the comparative method is not enough. In order to present a convincing reconstruction of the phonology and lexicon of a proto-language, a comparativist should know enough phonetics to be able to evaluate and interpret the works and data transcribed by other linguists, field workers, and or language specialists, if most of the data used for the reconstruction comes from both published and unpublished materials.

Secondly, the background of the comparativist is also important. Knowing at least one Southeast Asian language well, and having had an opportunity to hear some of the related languages and to observe the cultures of the peoples who speak the languages, will help the comparativist make less mistakes. For example, Peiros has reconstructed many forms, such as \*təma?~\*həma:~\*tərma:~\*pəma: for Proto-Katuic 'spirit', based on the data drawn from dictionaries: Bru /təməq?/ 'the spirit of a dead person not yet cremated'; Kui /ma:/ 'a spirit-possessed sorcerer who treats a sick person through a ritual that involves dancing, singing or chanting, accompanied folk music and instruments'; Pacoh /tərma:/ 'evil spirits that live everywhere and eat people, or cause sickness'; Katu AD /pəma:/ 'priestess chants' (Peiros, 1996, pp. 34-35). A better reconstructed form would be \*dəmmɒk 'ជំលោយ a kind of malevolent spirit' which has become /təmɒŋ?/, /tamɒk/, /tamɒpk/, /tamɒpk/, and /damɒpk/ in Bru, Ta-oi', Chatong, Kriang, and Kantu respectively. The word /ma:/ 'sorcerer' in Kui should not be regarded as cognate

since it is a recent Thai-Lao loan, and in fact ໝ່ອີ້ /mɔ̄: phi:/ whose job is to exorcize or chase away the evil spirits which have possessed the bodies of sick people, thus, a great enemy of ພຶປອບ /phi: pò:p/. Moreover, of his 1,241 reconstructed roots, eleven of them turn out to be Thai-Lao loans and one is a French loan: item 5, p.1 \*ce: 'corner' (Lao); item 46, p.4 \*ca:p 'walk quietly' (Lao); item 85, p.6 \*[t/d]əhe: 'shave' (Lao); item 99, p.7 \*hat 'practise' (Thai); item 189, p.13 \*ki:? 'dumb, mute' (Lao); item 233, p.16 \*ka? 'to hook' (Lao); item 520, p.36 \*sənha: 'crossbow' (Thai, Lao); item 715, p.48 \*?bu[ə/o]ŋ 'spoon' (Lao); item 991, p.67 \*te:~\*ti: 'from' (Thai, Lao); item 1105, p.75 \*?di:t 'spring back' (Thai, Lao); item 1188, p.80 \*hə?i:~\*[s/]?i: 'female' (Thai, Lao); item 1170, p.79 \*we:l 'village' (French). This type of error can be avoided if the comparativist knows the national language or the lingua-franca of the areas where the languages used for the reconstruction are spoken.

Lastly, the co-operation of local linguists working together with the comparativist can also be useful. Western comparativists have come to see us for our field data or dictionaries, this is the only kind of co-operation they want to have so far.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The research project on "Languages and Cultures of Mon-Khmer Ethnic Groups in Xekong Province, Lao PDR: A Foundation for Research and Development Planning" was officially approved eighteen months after the submission of the application. It was regarded by the Lao Government as academic co-operation between Lao PDR and Thailand. About twenty-five Lao academicians and officials were assigned by the Ministry of Information and Culture and the local government of Xekong province to act as my co-workers and assistants. The Xekong project has been funded by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF). Maps of Lao PDR, Xekong province, and the areas where Chatong, Triw and Dakkang are spoken can be found in the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> A few different ethnic groups have been grouped together under Bru/Brou, So and Suai. The names "Bru/Brou, So, Suai" are not ethnonyms; the word /bru:/ means 'mountain' and /suai/ means 'tributes'. The Chatong informant, Han Wilai, said that they had been called by other ethnic groups living in the Boloven Plateau areas "Bru", which simply means 'mountain people or highlanders'. As for the Suai, there are two different groups in the Thataeng district of Xekong province, one group speaks a Katuic language and the other group speaks a West Bahnaric language. See details in L-Thongkum, 1997 and 1999.

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