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'ong, Kantu, Ngkriang, Katang, Ong, Yir and Ta'oih. Proto-East-Katuic was reconstructed by D.M. Thomas (1976) based on the Brou, Pacoh and Katu data collected by SLL 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 Bhanaric 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. 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.) See the diagram showing the sub-grouping and relationship of the Katuic languages in Figure 2.

![Katuic family tree](image)

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)ɔr?manj/*(k/?)ɔr?manj (East) ‘complete’/‘finally’/‘all’
   soot’ Peiros: *sərməŋ~*kəməŋ
   West: kəm (Kui)
   East: sambaŋ (Bru Brou So) kamanj (Pacoh)
   karməŋ (Ta-oi') harmanj (Chatong Kriang) ?armanj (Kantu Triw) ramanj (Katu) tamanj (Dakkang)

2) *(k/?)əta:ɔw (East) ‘sugarcane’
   Peiros: *kəta:w~*ʔeta:w
   West: katu:m (Kui)
East: kata:w (Bru Ta-oi' Kriang Dakkang Triw) kata:w (Bru) ?ata:w (Pacoh Kantu Katu) ta:w (Chatong)

(3) *(p/?)əluj (East) 'น้ำเต้า' bottle gourd'
Peiros: *ʔəluəj
West: ʔənu:t-ʔə:t (Kui)
East: ʔəluəj (Bru) ʔaluoj (Brou) ʔəluj (Kantu Katu) paluəj (Dakkang Triw) luːj (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang)

(4) *ʔəc (East) 'เพอม thin, skinny' Peiros: ʔəj?
West: takʔam (Kui)
East: ʔəc (Chatong Kriang Kantu Katu) ʔəj? (Pacoh Ta-oi') ʔəj? (Bru) ʔəj? (Brou) ʔək (Dakkang) ʔəok (Triw)

(5) *təkal (East) 'ขุน muddy, murky'
Peiros: *təkal~*təka:l
West: laʔoʔ (Kui)
East: takal (Bru Chatong Katu) tikal (Pacoh Kantu Triw) taŋkal (Dakkang) takəl (Kriang) takəl (Ta-oi') takəl (Brou)

(6) *təluk (East) 'เมฆ หมอก cloud, fog' Peiros: *dəluʔ
West: laməl (Kui)
East: taluk (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang) tiluk (Triw) taluʔ? (Bru) tuluk (Pacoh) daluk (Katu) tilək (Kantu)

(7) *ʔəsuəm (West, N.East); *ʔəncəŋ (C.East, S.East) 'ต้ม shrimp' Peiros: *ʔəsuəm~*ʔəsəuəm
West, N.East: kasuəm (Kui) ʔasəm (Pacoh) ʔasəm (Bru So) ʔasəm (Brou)
C.East, S.East: นโค (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kangtu Dakkang)

(8)  *(-)ฮ่อคัะ (West, N.East);  *ثارเว (C.East, S.East) มะวิ waist Peiros:  *ฮ่อคัะ

West, N.East: ฮ่อคัะ (Kui) ฮ่อคัะ (Bru So)

C.East, S.East: ฮ่อคัะ (Kriang) ฮ่อคัะ (Ta-oi')

(9)  *กอตาว (West, N.East);  *ทอ (C.East, S.East)

ร้อน (ร่างกายแดด) hot (body, sunlight)'

Peiros:  * [k/q]อตาว~*[k/q]าตาว

West, N.East:  กอตาว (Kui Bru) กอตาว (Brou So) กิตาว (Pacoh)

C.East, S.East: ทอ (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang)

(10)  *ก่อนห (West, N.East, C.East);  *เอิ่นว (S.East) อื่น other, another'

Peiros:  *ก่อนห~*ก่อนห

West, N.East, C.East: โอมว (Kui) โอมว (Bru So Ta-oi') โอมว (Chatong Kriang) โอมว (Pacoh)

S.East: โอมว (Dakkang) โอมว (Triw) โอมว

(11)  *ทอค (West, N.East, C.East);  *ยาย (S.East)

เหล็ก iron' Peiros:  *ทอค?

West, N.East, C.East: ทอค (Kui Pacoh Ta-oi'
Chatong Kriang) ทอค (Bru So)

S.East: ยาย (Kantu Dakkang Triw)

(12)  *ทอหลา (West, N.East);  *ฮอมผัก (C.East);

พลง (S.East) ผล (กล้วย) bunch of bananas'

Peiros:  *ดอลห~*ย่อลห
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:

\[(14)\]

\*bən (N.East); \*biŋ (C.East, S.East); 'prend full'

Peiros: *bəŋ~*biŋ

N.East: bən (Pacoh) pən (Bru) pən (Brou)

C.East: pən (Ta-oi') piŋ (Chatong Kriang)

S.East: biŋ (Kantu Katu) biŋ (Dakkang Triw)
(15) *kənciik (N.East); *ca$s (C.East, S.East); 'to comb' Peiros: *[h/s]ənciːʔ~*kəciːʔ
N.East: ɲciːʔ (Bru) ɲciik (Brou) kəciik (Pacoh)
C.East: kəciik (Ta-oi') caːjh (Chatong Kriang)
S.East: ca$s (Kantu) caː (Dakkang) caːjh (Triw)

(16) *kəmbok (N.East); *təndu$k (C.East, S.East);
'smell/sense of brain'
Peiros: *kəmʔbocʔ~*[sʔ]oʔbocʔ
N.East: kuboʔ~kumboʔ (Bru) ?abok (So Brou)
 ?abok (Pacoh)
C.East: buʔ (Ta-oi') tartuʔ (Chatong) ʔanduːk (Kriang)
S.East: ?aduak (Kantu) nduːk (Dakkang) tarduːk (Triw)

(17) *roːc (N.East, C.East); *loːj (S.East); 'several intestines'
Peiros: *ruajʔ
N.East: ruajʔ (Bru) ruajʔ (Brou) roːjʔ (Pacoh)
ruac (So)
C.East: roːjʔ (Ta-oi') roːc (Kriang) lʊʔən (Chatong)
S.East: loːj (Kantu) lʊʔən (Dakkang Triw)

(18) *təpeh (N. East, C.East); *blə: (S.East);
'fireplace'
Peiros: *təpeh
N.East: tapeh (Bru Brou) tupeh (Pacoh)
C.East: tapeh (Ta-oi' Kriang) pləː (Chatong)
S.East: bləː (Kantu Dakkang Triw)

(19) *dʊc (N.East, C.East); *təntoːŋ (S.East); 'steal'
Peiros: *duojʔ~*tuojʔ
N.East: tuajʔ (Bru) təc (So) tuaj (Brou) tojʔ (Pacoh)
C.East: tojʔ (Ta-oi') təc (Kriang) taton (Chatong)
S.East: toŋ (Kantu) toŋ (Dakkang) taton (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) *pəriːiːs 'ไม่กวาด broom' Peiros: -
    paniːh (Ta-oi') parniːh (Chatong Kriang) parniːs
    (Kantu) parniːə (Dakkang) piriːiːh (Triw)

(21) *hoːm 'อาบ (น้ำ) to bathe' Peiros: -
    hoːm (Ta-oi' Chatong Kantu Dakkang Triw)
    hoːm (Kriang)

(22) *təhuː(ː)m หอม fragrant, scented' Peiros: -
    tahum (Ta-oi' Kriang) tahum (Chatong Dakkang
    Triw) tihum (Kantu)

(23) *bəɾʔəna: 'รวย rich, wealthy' Peiros: -
    parnaː (Ta-oi' Kriang Dakkang) bəɾnaː (Kantu)
    birnaː (Triw) parṇaː (Chatong)

(24) *tiːr 'ตะแกรงวางของเหนือเตาไฟ rack above a fire-
    place' Peiros: -
    tiːr (Ta-oi' Chatong Kantu Dakkang Triw)

(25) *kraw 'เผื่อน (ปลา) ตัวพื้นชนิดหนึ่ง to poison fish with a
    kind of plant' Peiros: -
    kraw (Ta-oi' Chatong Kantu Dakkang Triw)
    kərraw (Kriang)

(26) *təmbəːr 'นิ้วมือ (ความกว้าง) unit of measure (the
    width of the index and middle fingers when held
together)' Peiros: -
    kaʔbaːr (Ta-oi') təmbəːr (Kriang Dakkang) tapəːr
    (Chatong)
(27) *tampḗ '3 นิ้วเมื่อ (ความกว้าง) unit of measure (the width of the index, middle, and ring fingers when held together)' Peiros: -
kampḗ: (Ta-oi') tampḗ: (Kriang Dakkang) tape: (Chatong)

(28) *tampuon '4 นิ้วเมื่อ (ความกว้าง) unit of measure (the width of the index, middle, ring and little fingers when held together)' Peiros: -
kampuon (Ta-oi') tampu:ən (Kriang Dakkang) tampu:ən (Chatong)

(29) *(s/h)oba:k '5 นิ้วเมื่อ/ฟ้าเมื่อ (ความกว้าง) unit of measure (hand-width)' Peiros: -
sapak (Chatong) hapak (Kriang)

(30) *kapu:t ก้านอน (นิ้วโป้งถูบ) unit of measure (a fist with closed thumb) ' Peiros: *kəpū:t 'hold in fist, clench' kapuat (Ta-oi' Kriang) kapu:t (Chatong Triw) karpōt (Kantu)

(31) *(c/k)opp:l ก้าตัง (นิ้วโป้งถูบ) unit of measure (a fist with spread thumb) ' Peiros: -
copp:l (Kriang Triw) cipp:l (Kantu) kapp:l (Chatong) tapp:l (Dakkang) kapa:l (Ta-oi')

(32) *cēba:*cēbo: คีบ (ปลายนิ้วกั้น-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) cibē: (Kantu) hade: (Ta-oi') cabō: (Dakkang) cabōw (Triw)

(33) *cēda: คีบ (ปลายนิ้วกั้น-ปลายนิ้วโป้ง) unit of measure (from the tip of the little finger to the tip of the thumb with fingers spread apart)' Peiros: *cēdia~* [tə?dia]
hada: (Ta-oi') satã: (Chatong) catã: (Kriang) cida: (Kantu) cada: (Dakkang Triw Katu) tida: (Pachoh) satã: (Bru Kui)

(34) *kɔʔlanj/*ʔhanj  scok (chõsok-čiõmio) unit of measure (from the elbow to the wrist) Peiros: - kaʔlanj (Ta-oi') kallanj (Kriang) ?ahaŋ (Dakkang) ?ihaŋ (Triw)

(35) *tərnum/*(t)əpom  scok (chõsok-pλalymioɡ) unit of measure (from the elbow to the knuckles of the fist) Peiros: - tərnum (Chatong Kriang) tranum (Ta-oi') tərnym (Kantu) kapom (Dakkang) tapom (Triw)

(36) *kat/*kapaŋ  scok (chõsok-pλalynjúvλaλomio) unit of measure (from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger with open hand) Peiros: - kat (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu) kapaŋ (Dakkang Triw)

(37) *-amtu:p/*(c)ʔlo:k  čiaŋænæ (pλalynjúvλalang-rakænæ̊xhæŋ deyiɡænæ) 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') kalok (Dakkang) callok (Triw)

(38) *cər pəm/*cər ləm  čiaŋænæ (pλalynjúvλalang-λalgok) unit of measure (armspan, from the tip of the middle finger to the middle of the chest) Peiros: -
cər pəm (Ta-oi' Kriang) Note: pəm 'in heart'
cər ləm (Chatong Kantu) Note: ləm'diŋ liver'

(39) *jən cak  čiaŋænæ (pλalynjúvλalang-rakænæ̊xhæŋhæŋnæ) unit of measure (armspan, from the tip of the middle finger to the other armpit) Peiros: -
؟جاะ คัก (Kriang Kantu) Note: ؟جاะ 'ข้าง side' คัก 'ลำตัว body'

คัก คัก (Triw) Note: คัก 'ข้าง side'

*(ม/โอ)จำก/*(ม/โอ)ณทย 'ว่า unit of measure (arm-span, measured by extending both arms)'

Peiros: *؟เจาะ~*หงษ~*؟เจาะ~*[ห/ส]อมจิณ คัก (Ta-oi' Kriang) macros (Chatong) คะคะน (Kantu) อมะณ (Dakkang) คะคะน (Triw)

คะคะน (Brou) คะคะน (Pacoh) คะคะน (Katu) คะน (Kui) คะคะน (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, หลุม /lūm/, ถุ/ru/, ช่อง /chōn/, and ฟอง /phōn/ 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, *บรุ 'หลุม pit, big hole in the ground'; *ห่มะน 'ถุ, ช่อง small hole, aperture'; *ห่อรูญ 'ฟอง 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) *บรุ 'หลุม pit, big hole in the ground'
Peiros: *ตอง~*ปอรูญ
บรุญ (Ta-oi' Chatong Brou Pacoh Katu) ปอรูญ (Bru So) ปอรูญ (Kriang Kui) ปอรูญ (Kantu)

(42) *ห่มะน 'ถุ, ช่อง small hole' Peiros: *ตอง~*ปอรูญ
กานง (Chatong) หงษ (Kriang) หงษ (Bru)
บกน~*ห่มะน (Kantu) บกน (Dakkang Triw)

(43) *ห่อรูญ 'ฟอง hollow, cavity (in a tree)' Peiros: *ตอง~*ปอรูญ
troŋ (Ta-oi') hartuŋ (Chatong Kriang) ?arduŋ (Kantu) taroŋ (Dakkang) diroŋ (Triw) troŋ (Bru) toŋ (Pacoh) dregoŋ (katu)

(44) *maj 'both much in time must you' Peiros: *'?atoː~*hatoː maj (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw Kantu) maj (Kui So) maj (Bru) ?atoː (Brou) toː (Pacoh)

(45) *dur 'smoke cobra' Peiros: *-dərəh~*dərə? turi (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang Triw Brou Pacoh) turi (Bru) turi (Kui) turi (So)

(46) *kədi? 'keep to squeeze'
Peiros: *[s/ɕ]ətiet~*kətiet; *[s/ɕ]əlihian~*pəlihian ka?di? (Ta-oi') kadi? (Chatong Kriang Kantu) cadi? (Triw) di? (Dakkang Pacoh Katu)

(47) *cəpɨc 'keep to squeeze (juice)'
Peiros: *[s/ɕ]ətiet~*kətiet; *[s/ɕ]əlihian~*pəlihian capıc (Chatong) cipıc (Kantu) prıc (Dakkang Triw)

(48) *hənt 'cigarette tobacco' Peiros: *gəhənt
hənt (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang Triw Pacoh) hənt (Bru) hənt (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 'fragile gums'
Peiros: *kələŋ~*gələŋ~*hə[l/ɬ]əŋ
ləŋ (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang) ləŋ (Triw) ləŋ (Katu) ləŋ (Pacoh)

(50) *kəndeh ɗi (metal) to forge (iron)'
Peiros: * [k/ɕəntəj~* [h]ʃəntəj~*yəntəj
deh (Kantu Dakkang) deh-dideh (Triw) teh (Tai-oi') kəteh (Brou) teh (So) nteh (Kui) teh (Chatong Kriang)

(51) *pərdəh นัดที่ระเบิด to burst, to explode
Peiros: *[pə]dəh~*[hɬ]dəh~*[pə]dəh pa?dəh (Ta-oi') padəh (Triw Bru So Brou Pacoh) pidəh (Kantu) parədəh (Dakkang) ba?dəh (Kui) partəd (Chatong) patəd (Katu)

(52) *təqːəl แปด eight
Peiros: *dəqːəl~*[hɬ]qːəl~*təqːəl takəːl (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw Katu) tikəːl (Kantu Pacoh) takqəːl (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 ปี (ไม่แข็ง) > ไม่ช่าง to blow > blowpipe' Peiros: *pələh~*[b]əlah 'blowgun'
?uh (v.) > paluh (n.) (Ta-oi')
pluh (v.) > palluh (n.) (Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw)
pləh (v.) > palləh (n.) (Kantu)

(54) *cast > *cərənas หวี (n.) > หวี (n.) to comb > a comb'
Peiros: -
cas (v.) > cinəs (n.) (Kantu)
cət (v.) > carač (n.) (Dakkang)
cəj (v.) > canəj (n.) (Chatong Kriang)
cəj (v.) > carraj (n.) (Triw)
(55) *peŋ > *pəŋəŋ 'shooting' (noun) > หนึ่งไม้ 'to shoot (crossbow) > crossbow'

Peiros: *γαράν 'to shoot'; *τεμίάν 'crossbow'

peŋ (v.) > panęŋ (n.) (Chatong Kriang Dakkang)
peŋ (v.) > píŋəŋ (n.) (Kantu)
peŋ (v.) > panęŋ (n.) (Triw)

(56) *dom > *pəndo:m 'ripe > to ripe > to ripen (fruit)'

Peiros: -
dom (adj.) > padom (v.) (Ta-oi')
tōm (adj.) > patōm (v.) (Chatong)
dom (adj.) > pando:m (v.) (Kriang)
dom (adj.) > pandom (v.) (Kantu)
dum (adj.) > pandum (v.) (Dakkang Triw)

(57) *jur > *pəjəːr 'up > to get up > to wake

someone up' Peiros: -

jur (int.v.) > pəjəːr (tr.v.) (Chatong Kriang

Kantu Dakkang Triw)

jɔːr (int.v.) > pəjɔːr (tr.v.) (Ta-oi')

Note: jūː (Kui) jūr (Bru)

(58) *kap > *tərkap 'to bite > to bite each

other' Peiros: *kap 'to bite' kap > tərkap (Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang

Triw)

kam? > tərkam? (Ta-oi')

(59) *plan 'thatchgrass' Peiros: pəlhaŋ

plan (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Dakkang

Triw Bru So Pacoh Kui)

(60) *prak 'silver' Peiros: *[p/b]ərha?

pra? (Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Kantu Pacoh Bru

Kui) prak (Dakkang Triw) pra? (Brou) para? (So)
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,
*ŋh, *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 *-ʔ, respectively. See (67)-(75).

(67) *tɔʔmɔj とした ถอนแข็งหัว guest, stranger
Peiros: *tɛmʰaːj~*kəmhaːj
kamɔj (Kui) tɔmɔj (Bru Chatong Kriang Triw Katu) tamɔj (Pacoh) timɔj (Kantu) tamɔj (Brou) tamaw (Dakkang)

(68) *tɔʔnoːl ต่อ นอ post, pole Peiros: *tɛnhoːl
tanɔːl (Bru Kui) tanoːl (Pacoh Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw) tanuːl (So) tanoul (Brou) tanɔl (Kantu) tanal-tanɔl (Katu)

(69) *kɔʔlaj ไก่ haw Peiros: *kəlhaːj
kelaːj (Kui Bru So Ta-oi' Chatong Kriang Dakkang Triw)

(70) *kɔʔrok ควย cow, ox Peiros: *dɜʔhaʔ~*kəʔhaʔ
karɔk (Chatong Dakkang Katu) karrɔk (Kriang Kantu Triw) karrəʔ (Pacoh)

(71) *kɛʔtuɾ/kɛʔɾʔ ฟัน squash, white gourd
Peiros: *kəʔdiʔ
duuk (Ta-oi' Kriang) kaduuk (Pacoh) kadəʔ (Dakkang Triw Katu So) ?aʔək (Kantu) kaduiʔ (Brou Kui) kadəʔ (Bru)

(72) *ɓuʔc ตั้ง (หน้า) to wash (face) Peiros: *ʔɓuʔaːjʔ
buac (Kriang Katu) pʰuʔc (Chatong) buəc (Dakkang Triw) boːc (Kantu) buajʔ (Ta-oi') boajʔ (Pacoh)
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 /ɔ/, since his reconstructed central vowels are *i, *iː, *ə, *ə; *ʌ, *ʌː, *a, *əː. 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 *təməʔ~*həmaː~*tərmaː~*pəmaː for Proto-Katuic 'spirit', based on the data drawn from dictionaries: Bru /təmʔ/ 'the spirit of a dead person not yet cremated'; Kui /maː/ 'a spirit-possessed sorcerer who treats a sick person through a ritual that involves dancing, singing or chanting, accompanied folk music and instruments'; Pacoh /tərmaː/ 'evil spirits that live everywhere and eat people, or cause sickness'; Katu AD /pəmaː/ 'priestess chants' (Peiros, 1996, pp. 34-35). A better reconstructed form would be *dəməŋk 'a kind of malevolent spirit' which has become /təməʔ/, /tamək/, /taməŋk/, /taməŋk/, and /daməŋk/ in Bru, Ta-oi', Chatong, Kriang, and Kantu respectively. The word /maː/ 'sorcerer' in Kui should not be regarded as cognate
since it is a recent Thai-Lao loan, and in fact .IsNullOrWhiteSpace /mɔː/: phǐ:/ whose job is to exorcize or chase away the evil spirits which have possessed the bodies of sick people, thus, a great enemy of .IsNullOrWhiteSpace /pʰǐːpː/:. 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 *ceː 'corner' (Lao); item 46, p.4 *caːp 'walk quietly' (Lao); item 85, p.6 *[t/d]eː 'shave' (Lao); item 99, p.7 *hat 'practise' (Thai); item 189, p.13 *kiː 'dumb, mute' (Lao); item 233, p.16 *kaʔ 'to hook' (Lao); item 520, p.36 *sənhaː 'crossbow' (Thai, Lao); item 715, p.48 *ʔbu[ə/o]ŋ 'spoon' (Lao); item 991, p.67 *teːɾːtiː 'from' (Thai, Lao); item 1105, p.75 *ʔditː 'spring back' (Thai, Lao); item 1188, p.80 *haʔiːɾː*[sʔ]ʔiː 'female' (Thai, Lao); item 1170, p.79 *weːl 'village' (French). This type of error can be avoided if the comparatist 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 comparatist can also be useful. Western comparatists 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

1 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.

2 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.

REFERENCES


