

ON SOME LEXICOLOGICAL EQUIVALENTS BETWEEN THE
NYAH KUR (IN THAILAND) AND THE VIET - MUONG
LANGUAGES (IN VIETNAM)

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1. According to the classification of the Mon-Khmer languages in South-east Asia suggested by Thomas and Headley (1970), the Nyah Kur language belongs to branch VI, the Monic branch, whereas the Viet-Muong languages belong to branch IX, the Viet-Muong branch.

1.1. According to L.T.Theraphan and G.Difflloth (1984), the speakers of Nyah Kur inhabit Thetchanbun, Chaiphum and Khorat provinces of Thailand, whereas those of Viet-Muong inhabit Vietnam and Laos: a) Vietnamese is the language of government in Vietnam; b) the languages of ethnic minorities such as **Muong** (Nguyen V.T, 1971; ANS, 1987), **Tho**, **Chut** with the dialects such as **May** (Tran T.D, 1986), **Sach**, **Malieng**, **Arem** (Tran T.D, 1983, 1990...), **Ruc** (Nguyen P.P, Tran T.D, M. Ferlus, 1988). The speakers of these language and dialects inhabit the mountainous areas of Hasonbinh, Thanhhoa, Nghetinh and Quangbinh provinces of Vietnam; c) **Thavung** (M. Ferlus, 1979) and **Pakatan** (M. Ferlus) are spoken in Laos Khammuon province. Thus, the Monic and Viet-Muong branches are not close to each other geographically.

1.2. Comparing the lexicon of Nyah Kun with those of the Viet-Muong, we do not intend to discuss more about the classification of the Mon-Khmer languages upon which Thomas has based his lexical statistics. Our aim is to provide an initial look at the Mon-Khmer origin of many Viet-Muong words which are difficult to recognize when compared within the group. And, based upon

their similarity, perhaps a way to explain several language changes in Vietnamese which are still uncertain could be found.

2. Discussing the origin of Vietnamese, Haudricourt (1954) stated "...la parenté du Vietnamien doit donc être recherchée au moyen du vocabulaire de base". The lexical correspondences between Viet-Muong and Nyah Kur help determine their Mon - Khmer origin due to regular correspondences in their basic registers, e.g:

a) 18 words denoting natural phenomena.
Example: N: *ngkaáj* "sky", V: *trời/ngày*; N: *khəjaál* "wind", V: *gió*, A: *kəjɔ́á*, T: *kjuu¹*; N: *chəméj* "star", V: *sao*, S: *Ma: komij*, Ml: *kumej*; N: *tií?* "earth", V: *đất*, Ml: *A: atǎk*, T: *ataak¹*; N: *daák* "water", V: *nước/dác*, A: *daák*, S: *Ma, Ml: dak*, T: *daak¹*; N: *kroónj* "river", V: *sông*; N: *hiáŋ* "soot", V: *bồ hóng*, A: *pohay*, S: *mòhjóŋ*, Ml: *mòhjóŋ*, e.g.

b) 22 words denoting the parts of human body.
Example: N: *mát* "eye", V: *mắt*, A, S: *mắt*, Ma, Ml: *mắt*, T: *mat¹*; N: *hmóh* "nose", V: *mũi*, A, S, MA, Ml: *muh*, T: *muyh¹*; N: *chóók* "human hair", V: *tóc*, A: *ut-úk*, S: *súk*, Ma: *usúk*, T: *sok¹*, M: *sak³*; N: *chəpéj* "showing one's teeth", V: *nanh*, S: *kanəj*, Ma: *kanəj*; N: *katuər* "ear", V: *tai*, A: *təaj*, S, Ma, Ml: *saj*, T: *saay¹*, M: *saj²*; N: *kóʔ* "neck", V: *cổ*, S: *roké*, Ma: *kó*, Ml: *kòʔ*; N: *chùŋ* "foot", V: *chân*, A, S, Ma: *ciŋ*, Ml: *ciŋ*, T: *ciŋ²*; N: *təklét* "scales", V: *da/lốt*, A: *aruót*, S: *korót*, Ma: *karót*, Ml: *kaʔót*; N: *ʔíc* "excrement", V: *cứt*, A, Ma, S, Ml: *kik*, e.g.

c) 10 words denoting social relations.
Example: N: *jàh* "person", V: *người*, Ma: *ʔmja*; N: *míəʔ* "mother", V: *mẹ*, Ma: *mié*, S: *miə*, A: *muó*, Ml: *mí*, T: *məə⁴*; N: *phaàʔ* "father", V: *bố/bọ*, A: *p¹eá*, Ma: *pó*, S: *bọ*, Ml: *bọ/pó*; N: *ɲciíʔ* "younger sibling", V: *em*, S: *cie*, Ma: *cié*, Ml: *cié*; N: *cáw* "grandchild of oneself or spouse", V: *cháu*, A: *cáw*, S, Ma: *cú*, Ml: *cáw*; N: *kuán* "one's child", V: *con*, A: *kən*, S, Ma: *kən*, T: *kən¹*, e.g.

d) 17 words denoting time and numerals.

Example: N: **təŋáj** "sky, heaven", V: **ngàyl/ngay**, Ml: **ŋǎj**; N: **patám** "nighttime", V: **dēm**, A, S, Ma, Ml: **lám**; N: **mluù?** "late afternoon", V: **trua**, A: **cilia**, S: **tua**, Ma: **kluo**; N: **hnaám** "year", V: **năm**, S, Ma, R, Ml: **năm**; N: **muòj** "one", V: **một**, A, Ma, S, Ml: **m̄uc**; N: **baàr** "two", V: **hai**, A: **hɛal**, S, Ma: **hal**, Ml: **hǎj**; N: **pií?** "three", V: **ba**, A: **pɛa**, Ma, M, Ml: **pa**, T: **paa**, R: **pa**; N: **tráw** "six", V: **sáu**, A: **poráw**, S: **săw**, Ma: **plăw/psăw**, Ml: **poŋăw**, R: **răw**; N: **mpóh** "seven", V: **bảy**, A: **pó**, S: **pǎj**, Ma, Ml: **pǎj**; N: **ŋcaám** "eight", V: **tám**, A: **thám**, S, Ma, Ml: **thám**, e.g.

e) 28 words denoting domestic animals. Example: N: **kaá?** "fish", V: **cá**, A: **akeá**, S: **ká**, Ma, Ml: **aká**; N: **ciám** "bird", V: **chim**, A: **icim**, S: **cim**, Ma: **icim**, T: **ciim**¹; N: **cáj** "louse", V: **cháy/chí**, A, Ma, S: **cí**, Ml: **cǎj**; N: **ciɛŋ** "elephant", V: **voi**, A: **acien**, S: **ciəŋ**, Ma: **acien**; N: **ntám** "crab", V: **cua/ram/dam**, A: **kotom**, S, Ma: **katom**, Ml: **rim/ɣim**; N: **ndoók** "mygale", V: **diá**, A: **katá**, S: **tá**, Ma: **tatǎ**, Ml: **rmtá**, T: **tɛh**, M: **dio**⁴; N: **chúr** "dog", V: **chó**, A: **acɔá**, S: **có**, Ml: **có**, Ma: **acó**, R: **acó**, T: **cɔɔ**³; N: **təbún** "stag", V: **mang**, S: **kabaŋ**, Ma: **tabaŋ**, e.g.

f) 13 words denoting staple goods. Example: N: **ŋ rii?** "pertle", V: **chày**, A: **ʔnri**, S: **kori**, Ma: **ʔnri**, Ml: **ʔnre**; N: **hnaá?** /**hǎá?** "cross - bow", V: **ná/nó**; A: **neé**, S, Ma: **ná**, Ml: **nó**; N: **búun-mraà?** "knife and machete", V: **(dao)rɤa/ra**, S: **porá/para**, Ma: **mrá**, Ml: **mɤá**; N: **choók** "rope", V: **thùng/chạc**, S: **cək**, Ma: **cək**; N: **ʔuəj** "firewood", V: **củi**, T: **kuyh**¹, A: **ku?**, S, Ma: **kúlh**, Ml: **kuh** e.g.

g) 14 words denoting familiar plants. Example: N: **chroó?** "ear of rice having no grain", V: **lúa/ló**, A: **alɔá**, S: **lɔ**, Ma: **alɔ**; Ml: **ulɔ**; N: **ŋkɔ** "husked rice", V: **gao**, A: **ʔŋkɔ**, S: **rokó**, Ma: **rukó**, Ml: **ʔŋkáv**; N: **ɣláh** "gold leaves", V: **lá**, A: **olɛé**, S: **lá**, Ma: **ulá**, M: **la**³; N: **rih** "root", V: **rɛ**, A: **rié**, Ma: **riél**, T: **hɛh**¹; N: **mphùəl** "cotton or kapok filere", V: **hoa/bông**, S: **pual**, Ma, Ml: **piəl/piəl**³; N: **chók** "raice straw or threshed rice stalks", V: **rom/toóc**, A: **thák**, S, Ma, Ml: **sók**; N: **tabáŋ** "bamboo shoot", V: **măng**, A: **abăŋ**, Ma: **kabăŋ**,

Ml: tabăŋ, e.g.

h) 17 words denoting characteristics and properties. Example: N: lăchùh "deep", V: sâu, Ml: ciŋu; N: kriiŋ "hard", V: cùng/răn, Ma: kasăn; N: chăŋwăj "slightly", V: thối hoặc, A: uók, S, Ma: pu?ók; N: pácáh "sour", V: chua, S: cuò/cuo, Ma, R: uco, Ml: cuó; N: lỏ? "long time", V: lâu, A: ulỏ, S: lo, Ml: ulo, T: aloo¹; N: ɣkráw "behind", Ml: kósú/ksâw; N: takát-ɣkát "cold", V: rét/ngắt, Ml: knát, Ma: takét; N: mò? "what", V: mô/cái gì, A: umú, S: mó/camó, Ma: camó e.g.

i) 8 words denoting action. Example: N: nthùm "clf. for bundles wrapped in cloth", V: gói/túm, A: utúm; N: ɣkiắm "uncooked rice", V: cấm; N: pəməj? "dream", V: mō/mó, M, S: me; N: wer-wer "flapping the wings", V: bay, S, A, Ml: pắl, e.g.

2.1. As we know, in Vietnamese there are compounds in which one of the two morphemes is considered meaningless, e.g. in "cổ nhả" meaning "generable speaking", the first morpheme "cổ" can be used independently, whereas "nhả" is a bound morpheme. Compared with its correspondence in Tay, "nhả" is known as a morpheme having Tay-Thai origin with the meaning of "cổ". Thus, "cổ nhả" in Vietnamese virtually means "cổ + cổ"

Comparing Vietnamese with Nyah Kur, we have found a number of correspondences enabling us to determine the meaningless morphemes in the words of "cổ nhả" type: This also means that formerly, these words used to be Mon-Khmer ones. Example: V: nợ nần, N: pənúl "debt"; V: rét ngắt, N: takát-ɣkát; V: cùng răn, N: kriiŋ; V: lặng ngắt, N: chəŋát "quiet" A: ciŋăt; V: ấm cúng, N: rə?uúŋ "warm"

2.2. On the other hand, in Vietnamese there are true Vietnamese words which have no correspondences in the others of the Viet-Mường group. Comparing these with those in Nyah Kur, we find out immediately that **they are genuine Mon-Khmer words** preserved by Vietnamese much better than the others in the Viet-Mường group. The following words can be considered to belong

these: V: má, N: tabál "cheek" - A: pím, S, Ma: puom puom, R: p ǝ́m puòm, Ml: póp; V: dêm, N: pətám - A, S, Ma, Ml: lăm; V: miêng, N: mbéj, "lips" - A: káj, S: káj, Ma, Ml: káj; V: dá/mú, N: hmó? "stone" - A: atéá, S: latá/tabá, Ma, Ml: latá, M: khu³, V: cáy, N: ɣkɛ? "species of tick-like insect living in loose soil on the bank of a waterway"; V: nom-mong, N: buúy "trap made of bamboo joint"; V: không, N: khên "not" - Ma, S, R, A: vǎy, Ml: de, M: aɣ².

2.3. Oppositely, there are many common words found in the other Viet-Muong languages do not occur in Vietnamese. But due to their correspondences in Nyar Kur, there is no reason why one should doubt their Mon-Khmer origin. Example: N: katáh "nightning", V: chóp - Ma, A: tá; N: chə méj, V: sao - S, Ma: kumiɲ, Ml: kumeɲ; N: khəp "cave", V: hang - S, Ma: kəp, Ml: kúp; N: chim "blood", V: máu - A: athém, S: sám, Ma, Ml: asám; N: kalíɲ "grease", V: mỡ - A: kluy, S: tluɲ /t.ùɲ, Ma: kluy/ klùɲ; N: ndél "heel of foot", V: gót chân - Ml: kadél; N: ɣàh, V: người - Ma: ?nyə; N: maàɲ "husband", V: chồng - S: miàɲ, Ma, Ml: miáy "brother"; N: ɣcií?, V: em - S: cié, Ma, Ml: cié; N: mənih, V: người - S: ní/nwí, Ma: uní, Ml: uné "people of Vietnam"; N: mpuhəl, V: hoa/bông - S: pual, Ma, Ml: piàl/piǎl; N: khliíc "pig", V: lợn/heo - Ml: sít; N: ciíɲ, V: voi - A: acieɲ, S: ciàɲ, Ma: aciàɲ; N: khám "land leech", V: vắt - A: kolieɲ, Ma: plim, Ml: plen; N: hnií? "rat", V: chuột - S, Ma: kuné, Ml: kunǎj; N: hmuák "hawk" V: diều hâu - A: kaléɲ, S, Ma, Ml: kaláy; N: hmuác "ant", V: kiến - A: umút; N: chúc "gnat", V: muỗi, A: tút, Ml: tiút/tiúc; N: húɲ "hornet" V: ong - S, Ma: hɔɲ; N: ndək "bran of rice", V: cám - S, Ma, Ml: kotúk/kántúk.

3. Formerly, basing upon the internal data of the Viet-Muong as those of other groups such as the Katuic, a number of linguists already mentioned the preglottalized series: */?b, ?d, ?j (M.Ferlus, 1976) and */?g (Tran T.D, 1991) in the proto Viet-Muong. Modern Vietnamese treats this preglottalized series as m, n, nh, ng; and the other Viet-Muong languages as b, d, j/c. g/k.

However, data to prove the existence of */?j, ?g/are very limited. To complement this situation, we'd better look for more data from the other language groups within the same family. Thus, the correspondences between Viet - Mường and Nyah Kur are very important for the reestablishment of */?j, ?g/. Example: V: rét ngắt, N: ɲkát - takát, Ma: takét; V: trời, ngày, N: ɲkáj; V: hoa, ngừng "car", N: ɲkóɲ

3.1. M.Ferlus (1978) proved that Vietnamese had undergone a monosyllablizing process. A result of this is that the Vietnamese middle stops became fricatives (*k > g, example: V: gạo. A: ?ɲkoó, S, Ma, R: rakó, Ml: ?ɲkáv). But the data from the other Viet-Mường languages show that there are still some middle stops which have not been made fricatives (Tran T.D. 1985; 1986) V: cát, R, A, S: takác "beach"; V: cá, A: akeá, S: ká, Ma, Ml, R: aká "fish"; V: cổ, S: raké, R: toké, Ma: kó, Ml: kò? . Perhaps, the correspondences between Nyah Kur and the Viet-Mường languages such as N: haát, V: cát; N: ?íc, V: cút, A, Ma, S, Ml: kít; N: hàj, V: ngày "day", S, Ma, Ml: pakso/pakuó could suggest that vietnamese still preserves the two tongue base sounds whereas the other Viet-Mường languages do not ?

4. It might be possible to draw the following conclusions : as far as Vietnamese and the other Viet-Mường languages are concerned, if only the interior reestablishing method were applied, there would be many problems remaining unsolved. Because as exterior Mon-Khmer languages, Vietnamese and the other Viet - Mường languages have been undergoing close contact with the languages from their families such as Tay, Thai and Chinese etc...

Initial:

V - Vietnamese	Ma - May	M - Mường
R - Ruc	N - Nyah Kur	A - Arem
Ml - Malieng	S - Sach	T - Thavung

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