Vietnamese in Mon-Khmer Perspective

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Establishing the Parentage of Vietnamese.

Understanding of the historical development of the Vietnamese language *was profoundly affected by three articles by André-Georges* Haudricourt published in 1953-1955:

La place du vietnamien dans les langues austroasiatiques;

De l'origine des tons en vietnamien;

Comment reconstruire le chinois archaique.

The last in particular illustrated the way in which vocabulary resemblances between Tai languages and Vietnamese, noted by Maspéro (1912), could be due to separate early borrowings from Chinese (antedating the stage of development of Chinese reflected in the standard Vietnamese readings of Chinese characters known as Sino-Vietnamese).

These investigations tended to defuse arguments against regarding Vietnamese as having originally been a Mon-Khmer language. Statistical evidence has subsequently been brought to bear to strengthen this position, as vocabularies from a large number of Mon-Khmer languages have become available. Word lists showing striking resemblances between Vietnamese and its near neighbors in the southern highlands of Vietnam appeared in David Thomas' article

on "Mon-Khmer Subgroups in Vietnam" (1966). Specific estimates
of percentages of related words on such lists were given in "More
on Mon-Khmer Subgroupings" (Thomas & Headley, 1970) and other
counts by Huffman (1976). When one takes standardized lists that
have the appearance of representing basic vocabulary, one can count
perhaps twenty percent of items for which the Vietnamese word and
the word in a given Mon-Khmer language appear to be related. No
such degree of resemblance can be found in the vocabulary of a Tai
language. (I have tried comparing a Lao and a Vietnamese list and
could find only 7% of plausibly relatable entries.) In the light
of such figures, it is hard not to conclude that Vietnamese bears
a close relationship to the Mon-Khmer family.

Earlier Discussion.

The quest for an affiliation for the Vietnamese language has
a long and variegated history. Early investigators, finding it written
with Chinese characters and pervaded with Chinese vocabulary
generally concluded that it was related to Chinese. So Bishop Taberd,
introducing the Pigneaux-Taberd Dictionarium, declared (1838, i):
"Dubium non est quin Anamitarum lingua à Sinensi ortum ducat." [There
is no doubt but what the language of the Annamites derives its origin
from the Chinese.]

The first to connect Vietnamese with the Mon-Khmer languages was James R. Logan, who propounded his views of "The Mon-Anam Formation" in 1852. In my opinion, we generally give Logan too much credit for his insights. His "formations" were not language families as we have been understanding that term for the last hundred years-- he was a pretty thorough-going wave theorist avant la lettre. Many of the linkages he proposed were spurious. And as far as distinguishing between a Tai connection and a Khmer connection for Vietnamese, it is to be recalled that for Logan "Lau" was one division of the "Mon-Anam Formation". [Many of his spellings merit a sic after them by today's conventions.]

For Logan the Munda family of languages in India was part of "Dravirian", although similarities between Munda and Mon-Khmer languages were also noted. These soon came to be given a more prominent place in language comparison. In 1856 Schott suggested a specific relationship between Vietnamese and Mundari--on the basis of similarities in numerals and pronouns only.

It was in 1889 that Ernst Kuhn presented a description of Mon-Khmer linguistic relationships that is consistent with recent research. In fact, his schema of divisions within the family is almost isomorphic to that given by Headley (1976a, 434-5). Since Headley's is based on lexical innovations and Kuhn judged by lexical clusterings, there ought to be convergence, even though Kuhn had extremely meager data to work with.

Kuhn's outline differs from Headley's in only two significant particulars. One of these is easy to explain. Headley postulates a subfamily with four conponents: Bahnaric, Katuic, Monic, and Viet-Muong. Kuhn grouped the other three together, but separated what we now call Katuic as a main division of the "so-called Mon-Annam languages" (191). Clearly this arrangement was prompted by a reliance on numerals as highly diagnostic of language relationships-- a prevalent view at that time, following, no doubt, from its success with Indo-European. The Katuic languages have in common a uniquely innovating set of numbers from six through nine. The other mismatch is Kuhn's joining of Khmer and Pearic. He even refers to Pearic languages as dialects of Khmer (194). This discrepancy is harder to understand. Perhaps it reflects the bias of his primary sources (e.g. Crawfurd, 1828). The lack in Khmer of any unitary words for the numbers six through nine that could be compared with other languages might also have contributed.

Kuhn also maintained the relationship of Mon-Khmer to Munda, although he considered it premature to conclude that this was a sure genetic connection--into what Schmidt (1906) christened the Austroasiatic family. This more remote relationship, linking Mon-Khmer including Vietnamese with Munda (and Nahali?) is beyond the scope of the present paper.

In general Kuhn's rather clear ideas have had less subsequent influence than one might have hoped. The second half of his 1889 article is devoted to demonstrating the Malayo-Polynesian affinity of Cham. He also specifically notes (193) that Sedang is close to Bahnar. Yet, as late as 1924, we find Przyluski postulating an Eastern subgroup of Mon-Khmer including Sedang and three Malayo-Polynesian languages: "Cham, Jarai, Radé, Sedang".

Still, in spite of agreements in basic vocabulary, there has been a marked reluctance to consider Vietnamese as a Mon-Khmer language.

Kuhn himself, at the end of his discussion, rather backs away from his placement of Vietnamese, remarking on the relatively scant representation of that language in his eighty-five vocabulary sets apart from the numerals (219). There are, in fact, nine more instances where a Vietnamese term could be added to the comparison; we can only speculate on whether it would have in any way allayed his doubts if he had had that information. He also alludes to the belief of some historians that the Vietnamese had entered Viêt-nam from China at a relatively late date.

The main stumbling block for acceptance of a genetic tie between Vietnamese and Mon-Khmer has always been the great typological gulf that separates them. These differences were all adduced by Henri Maspéro (1912, 115-6), although for him the conclusive point was that

the tones in Vietnamese could be derived from proto-Tai, while he saw no possibility of tones arising in a Mon-Khmer language. This argument was not really dealt with until Haudricourt's 1954 article on origine des tones. As Haudricourt has pointed out (1974, 6), Maspéro was the first to take the position that the tones in Vietnamese words demanded a serious historical explanation. Most others merely disregarded them.

Maspero's views exercised a considerable influence in the field, apparently leading Schmidt, who in 1905 had classified Vietnamese as a Mon-Khmer language, to align it with Tai languages in his 1926 work. Those views also seem to lie behind the declaration of Pinnow much more recently (1963, 141) that: "we may unhesitatingly regard Vietnamese and Müöng as Thai languages". He included Vietnamese forms in his comparative studies (1959; 1965), but considered Vietnamese a Tai language with extensive Mon-Khmer borrowings paralleling the case of Cham, a Malayo-Polynesian language with a great deal of Mon-Khmer vocabulary--most recently discussed by Headley (1966b).

Idiosyncrasies of Vietnamese.

If it were not a thorny question, the lineage of Vietnamese would not have been for so long a bone of contention. Following present-day theory that a preponderance of basic vocabulary must indicate the origin of a language, we assign Vietnamese to the

Mon-Khmer stock. As, in recent years, more lexical information about many Mon-Khmer languages has become available, this relationship seems increasingly secure.

It is, however, clear that Vietnamese has, as it were, undergone a mutation that strikingly differentiates it from its relatives.

These drastic changes were brought about primarily by the influence of Chinese. For nearly a millenium Vietnam was ruled from China, and in the subsequent millenium it has constantly been subject to Chinese cultural influences. It was indubitably in imitation of Chinese that Vietnamese words came to consist normally of a single syllable, whereas the typical Mon-Khmer pattern is a major syllable preceded by a weak one. The structure of syllables tended to be limited in the direction of what was possible in Chinese at any given time. The use of prefixation and infixation as grammatical processes disappeared. The cultural vocabulary became almost entirely Chinese, and the basic vocabulary, too, was heavily influenced.

The way in which Vietnamese has been moved away from its Mon-Khmer heritage is interestingly illustrated in studies on similarities in the basic parts of the lexicon. In Huffman's research reported in 1976, he counted apparent cognation between each pairing of eighteen languages on both a 500-word list and a 100-word list. With each of the other seventeen languages, Vietnamese

scored lowest in comparisons made on the 500-word list. Yet, with the more basic 100-word list, it was often not at the bottom of the cognate ranking. As many as five other languages placed below it--the figure for the Chaobon list (567). On the average three percentage points--that is, on a 100-word list, three more apparently cognate words--separated Vietnamese from the language showing fewest cognates with each given language. On the 500-word list it averaged eleven fewer apparent cognates than whatever language made the next worst showing. Thus is the general impression confirmed that when we consider very basic words any Mon-Khmer language shows a considerable similarity to Vietnamese, but, as we move away from these, further cognates become hard to find. Like the typological changes, this too must most probably be laid to the influence of Chinese, although no investigations to prove that contention in detail have yet been conducted.

The genetic connection of Vietnamese to Mon-Khmer gives us an unusual language family, in which the largest language is a maverick. With speakers now numbering nearly 50,000,000, Vietnamese accounts for around four-fifths of the total for the combined grouping. The two languages with long written traditions, Khmer and Mon, now have at most, respectively, 7,000,000 and 700,000 users. The fourth--though recent--literary language, Khasi, may be spoken by 500,000. All the other Mon-Khmer populations have been considered "tribal". The largest among the perhaps seventy

other languages is probably Kuy, which may number over 250,000 in
Thailand and Cambodia. Figures at this point and beyond are, how-
ever, mostly in the realm of wild guesses.

The Lexical Core.

The most convenient place to see how comparable a good deal
of Vietnamese basic vocabulary is to that of other Mon-Khmer
languages is in the lists in Gordon H. Luce's discussion of Danaw
(1965). While the Vietnamese items in the "Further Comparisons"
to his 245-word list were, of course, not guaranteed as related
but only offered as interesting similarities, still a large
number of significant cognates do appear in these pages.[1] Huffman
(1977) assembled 99 Vietnamese items with suggested cognates in
18 other Mon-Khmer languages. Even though I have grave doubts
about twenty or so of these sets,[2] as a whole they also provide
a coherent look at Vietnamese relationships to Mon-Khmer lexical
items. (Thirty-five entries that are also glosses from Luce's
list provide additional breadth of coverage.) There are more
Vietnamese words in etymological comparisons in Shorto's <u>Dictionary
of the Mon Inscriptions</u> (1971), but it is cumbersome to derive an
overview of their significance by reading through a dictionary.

Vietnamese Etymologies.

As a demonstration of the fit of Vietnamese with the sound system of Mon-Khmer, a fairly detailed listing will be given of Vietnamese developments from the parent language. Only a single Mon-Khmer cognate is give for any but a very few. Most examples can be illustrated from other languages and could be strengthened by parallel examples, although a few are unique in available data. Since Written Khmer has an archaizing spelling that often helps to clarify historical developments, and since extensive lexicographic resources are available for it, that language has been preferred for citations. (Of the many transcriptions of Cambodian that are found in the literature, that used here approximates the practice of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.) Other languages are utilized mostly for examples whose connections to Vietnamese are easy to perceive.

A.   Initial Consonants.

Most Mon-Khmer correspondences can be explained as reflexes of a fairly simple consonant system:

k	c		t	p	ʔ
g	ɟ		d	b	
		s			h
ŋ	ɲ		n	m	
y	r		l	w	

The voiced stops, *g, *ɟ, *d, *b, did not occur in syllable-final position. Certain clusters underwent special developments. The Mon-Khmer sources of Vietnamese initial consonants were discussed in Maspéro's 1912 monograph. As he established, originally voiced onsets are reflected by the Vietnamese tones huyền, nặng, and ngã.

Việt[3]		PMK	Việt	Gloss	(Language)	Comparison	
/ /		*					
k	<	k	con	offspring	WrKhmer	kūn	
	<	g	cụm	tuft	WrKhmer	gumb	
c	<	c	cháu	grandchild	WrKhmer	cau	
	<	ɟ	chài	net	WrKhmer	jāl	
d	<	t	ɗan	weave	WrKhmer	tpāɲ	
	<	d	ɗặp	dam up	WrKhmer	dɔp	stop up
b	<	p	bǎn	shoot	WrKhmer	pāɲ	
	<	b	bụng	belly	WrKhmer	buŋ	
t	<	s	tóc	hair	WrKhmer	sɔk	
h	<	h	há	open one's mouth	WrKhmer	hā	
[ʔ]	<	ʔ	ong	bee	Bahnar	ōŋ	wasp

In the next group of examples we have instances of the developments referred to as "spirantisation" by Ferlus (1975; 1976) and as "softening" by Pulleyblank (1981). It seems clear that these sounds derive from consonants preceded by certain prefixes

at an early stage of Vietnamese. This explanantion was first
suggested by Haudricourt (1965, 171), who noted a preceding r
in a number of Mon-Khmer cognates of such words. It now seems
unlikely that r can be posited in all instances. Neither, appa-
rently, did all prefixes have this effect, since many Vietnamese
words with unaffected initials show prefixes in their apparent
cognates throughout Mon-Khmer. Until the general history of Mon-
Khmer prefixing has been to some degree unraveled, the nature
of the pre-Vietnamese forms must remain obscure. Here they will
be noted only by putting hyphens around the proto-consonants.

γ	<	-k-	gáu	a bear	Sedang	rokóu	
	<	-g-	gõ	knock	WrKhmer	goḥ	
y	(gi)	ky	gió	wind	Old Mon	kyāl	
	<	-c-	giêt	kill	Old Mon	kucit	
	?	-ɟ-	già	old	Old Mon	pju	mature
	(d)	y	dài	long	Katu	yaal	
	<	-t-	da	skin	Chrau	ntɵ	
	<	-d-	dọc	monkey	Bahnar	ʔdŏk	
v	(v)	w	vè	return	WrKhmer	vil	
	<	hw	vít	hinder	WrKhmer	svit	tough
	(p)	-p-	vuốt	rub	Old Mon	sumpot	
	<	-b-	vŏ	flap (wings)	Rŏngao	bâh	

Modern <u>v</u> that is the result of "softening" was generally written with a special letter β in Alexandre de Rhodes' materials of around 1650. At a late stage in pre-Vietnamese it is assumed that numerous voiceless onsets before resonants merged, probably to give voiceless resonants, indicated by *hw above and *hr &c. in the following groups. The proto-consonant most frequently acting this way was probably *s.

r	<	*r	rễ	root	WrKhmer	r̥s
	<	*hr	răng	tooth	Palaung	hrang[2]
	<	*-s-	rắn	snake	WrKhmer	msaɲ

Among the nasal-consonant etymologies, instances such as *ŋg exemplify what James A. Matisoff has often referred to for Tibeto-Burman languages as "nasal preemption".

ŋ	<	*ŋ	ngày	day	WrKhmer	thŋai
	<	*hŋ	ngái	far	WrKhmer	chŋāy
	<	*ŋg	ngồi	sit	WrKhmer	ʔɔŋguy
ɲ	<	*ɲ	nhà	house	Lawa	ɲïeq
	<	*hɲ	nhớ	remember	Bru	saɲɗɯ
	<	*ʔɟ	nhỏ	small	Rồngao	qyoh	young
	<	*ɲc	nhẫn	ring	WrKhmer	ʔɔɲciən
	<	*ɲɟ	nhẹ	light in weight	Khmuʔ(T'ɛng)	ɲjal
n	<	*n	nẹp	bend over	Rồngao	nap
	<	*hn	năm	year	WrKhmer	chnam
	<	*ʔd	nước	water	Old Mon	ɗāk
	<	*nt	nặng	heavy	Souei	ntɔng

m	<	*m	mũi	nose	Old Mon	moh	
	<	*hm	mới	new	WrKhmer	thmī	
	<	*ʔb	măng	bamboo shoot	Old Mon	tɓaṅ	
	<	*mp	mơ	dream	Khmu (T'ɛ̀ng)	'mpo	
l	<	*l	lỗ	hole	WrKhmer	luḥ	perforate
	<	*hl	lá	leaf	WrKhmer	slā	areca

Examples of nasal preemption can be adduced for *ŋg, *nt, *mp, but not for *ŋk, *nd, *mb. This fact may be a result merely of insufficient examination of the data.

Vietnamese s /s/ is the normal reflex of any initial consonant followed by *r when the cluster as a unit was ancestral to the Vietnamese form. (Sometimes widely attested initials disappeared, joining the correspondences for *hr or *r:

		réo	shout	WrKhmer	krev	
		rú	wooded mountain	Bru	brðu	
		rừng	jungle	Khasi	kyreng	forest.)

s	<	*kr	sau	after	WrKhmer	krau	
	<	*gr	sầm	reverbrating crash	WrKhmer	graṁ	
	<	*cr	sa	fall(rain)	Middle Mon	croh	
	<	*ɟr	sâu	deep	WrKhmer	jrau	
	<	*dr	sừng	horn	Old Mon	draṅ	tusk
	<	*pr	sóc	squirrel	WrKhmer	kɔmpruk	
	<	*br	sợi	thread	Stieng	bray	
	<	*sr	săp	arrange	WrKhmer	srap	

In the Vietnamese of Alexandre de Rhodes around 1650 there were
two apparent clusters, bl and tl, the former deriving from clusters
of a labial with *l, the latter from most other consonants when followed
by *l. In modern Southern Vietnamese both yielded tr /t̩/. In Northern
Vietnamese the successor to bl is usually gi /z/, while that to tl
is tr /č/.

t̩	(bl)	<	*pl	trái	fruit	WrKhmer	phlε
		<	*bl	trời	sky,heaven	Khasi	Blei	God
		<	*ml	trầu	betel	WrKhmer	mlūv
t̩	(tl)	<	*kl	tram	100	Old Mon	klam
		?	*gl	tre	bamboo	Chrau	gle
		<	*cl	trâu	carabao	WrKhmer	chlūv	year of the ox
		<	*ɟl	tràn	invade	WrKhmer	jhlān	aggressive
		<	*tl	trăn	python	WrKhmer	thlan
		<	*sl	tréo	crossed	WrKhmer	slεv

In de Rhodes' material there is also a cluster ml. In modern
Vietnamese reflexes of his ml words appear with initial l or nh or as
doublets having both spellings. Not much comparative evidence has been
reported that bears on the earlier state of these words. In a 1966
article Henderson offered some suggestions of Khasi relationships.
Two of her examples seem compelling:

| mlớn | big,great | Khasi | mlan
mlen | robust,well built |
| mlạt | insipid | Khasi | blad |

On the basis of Khasi alone we cannot distinguish between the sources of ml and bl. The proto-language must in fact have had some onsets considerably more complicated than we can now account for. Even with better evidence it will still be risky to reconstruct these, since different languages often show different prefixes.

The only sequences that seem to have continued as clusters in modern Vietnamese are occasional examples of *kw and *gw.

kw	<	*kw	quay	roast on a spit	WrKhmer	khvai	
	<	*gw	quàng	surround	WrKhmer	ghvāng	deviate

For Vietnamese kh, th, ph, and x, examples are scarce, and it is difficult to pin down the Mon-Khmer sources. At the time when a scholarly pronunciation for Chinese (called Sino-Vietnamese) was codified in newly independent Vietnam after AD 939, Vietnamese apparently had a series of aspirated stops: *k' (> kh /x/), *c' (> x /s/), *t' (> th /t'/), *p' (> ph /f/). Certain Mon-Khmer languages have added aspiration to their historical voiceless stops and devoiced their historical voiced stops (cf. Haudricourt, 1965), but otherwise the possible etymological source for such a sound-type appears to have generally been a cluster of a stop followed by *h. Such sequences seem not to have been very common. (The aspiration shown in many of the Written Khmer examples in this study for the prior members of clusters is a relatively late phenomenon.)

x	<	*kh	khá	feel better	Old Mon	khis	in good shape
	<	*hk	kháp	join	Bahnar	hŏkŏp	
s	<	*ch	xéo	slanting	WrKhmer	chɛv	crooked
	<	*cʔ	xửơng	bone	WrKhmer	chʔɯŋ	
tʼ	<	*th	thổi	blow	Bru	thɔ̆r	
	ʔ	*sʔ	thối	rotten	WrKhmer	sʔuy	
f	<	*hp	phủi	dust off	Rŏngao	hŏpuih	sweep

The patterns of Sino-Vietnamese lead us to believe that Vietnamese

once had /ʃ/ which became /tʼ/. If the rather scant examples of

putative *sʔ > th are genuine, it seems likely that they were /ʃ/

rather than /tʼ/ before the merger.

A major study by Ferlus (1978) dwells largely on the relationships

of Vietnamese x. He posits as its main source */TŠ/. The sound

sequence that in a living language might be interpreted as /tš/ might

equally well be /cʼ/ or /ch/ in another, so his presentation differs

from that implied in the table above primarily in how it views the

sound-pattern of the proto-language. At the level of Proto-Mon-Khmer

he believes there were two entities **/TS/ and **/TŠ/, with **/TS/

giving /h/ in Khmer, Bahnaric, and Katuic (summary on his p.26).

He further tentatively proposes three more Proto-Mon-Khmer phonemes: */Š/,

*/Ś/, and */Q/. The etymologies offered for these last three suggested proto-

phonemes and those that support the distinction between **/TS/ and

**/TŠ/ involve a good many problems--not the least of which is the

inclusion of some items that are probably Chinese borrowings. The

present discussion seems no place to go into the technicalities of

the evidence, but I am unconvinced. (As noted above, I do believe that Vietnamese at one time had /ʃ/, the equivalent of Ferlus' /ś/, but I am reluctant to see this as a unique preservation from Proto-Austroasiatic.) Certain other proposals for the existance of additional Proto-Mon-Khmer initials have been put in doubt in a study by Diffloth (1977).

B. Final Consonants.

For the most part, the word-final correspondences are more straightforward than those for initial consonants, except as some recent changes in Vietnamese may have clouded the picture.

k	< *k	tóc	hair	WrKhmer	sɔk
ŋ	< *ŋ	cong	bent	WrKhmer	koŋ
t	< *c	thịt	meat	WrKhmer	sac
	< *t	chát	acrid	WrKhmer	cɔt	sour
n	< *ɲ	đan	weave	WrKhmer	tpăɲ
	< *n	trăn	python	WrKhmer	thlan
p	< *p	đập	dam	WrKhmer	dɔp	stop up
m	< *m	năm	year	WrKhmer	chnam
i	< *y	ruồi	housefly	WrKhmer	ruy
	< *r	vôi	lime(CaCO$_3$)	WrKhmer	kɔṁpor
	< *l	muối	salt	WrKhmer	ʔɔṁpil
u	< *w	tréo	crossed	WrKhmer	slɛv

After front vowels, *r and *l regularly disappear.

| # | < | *r | ɗi | go | WrKhmer | t̪ɤr | walk |
| | < | *l | nhẹ | light in weight | Khmu? (T'ɛ̀ng) | ñjal | |

In some words where cognates in other languages show these consonants after non-front vowels, they are absent in Vietnamese in circumstances that are at present inexplicable.

| # | < | *r | chua | sour | WrKhmer | jŭr | |
| | < | *l | gió | wind | Old Mon | kyāl | |

The reflexes of *-s and *-h are tonal. When the pre-Vietnamese initial was voiceless we have the hỏi tone and when it was voiced, ngã.

ʔ	<	*s	kẻ	draw a line	WrKhmer	kɛs	scratch
	<	*h	bỏ	toss	WrKhmer	poḥ	throw away
~	<	*s	rẽ	root	WrKhmer	r̥s	
	<	*h	lỗ	hole	WrKhmer	luḥ	perforate

There is some support, particularly from Khmu?, for a distinction in the proto-language between presence and absence of a final glottal stop. The situation is not entirely clear, as I have endeavored to show in a paper I hope to get published elsewhere. We assume that original final *? is reflected as Vietnamese sắc tone after originally voiceless initials and nặng after voiced ones, while originally open syllables receive ngang or huyền tone respectively, as Haudricourt was the first to suggest (1954).

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  ´    <  *?   chó́    dog      Khmu?     sɔ?
  .    <  *?   chi̟u   endure   Khmu?     cu?       hurt
  ⁔    <  *#   tre     bamboo   N. Khmu?  təlaa
  `    <  *#   mày     thou     Khmu?     mee       [ơ̚]
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C. Vowels.

In a study published in 1976, Harry L. Shorto showed that a
vowel system rather close to that of written Khmer could account
for the developments of vowels in Mon and in Khmer--and, he believed,
in the rest of the family as well. His system contains the following
units:

```
     uu         u         i          ii
         uə        əə        iə
     oo         o    ə    e          ee
     ɔɔ         ɔ    a               ai
                    aa
```

The principal mergers giving the Written Khmer system are:

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o                ə              e                              ii
 ⟩  o            ⟩  ɔ           ⟩  ε  after voiceless onsets    ⟩  i (or ɯ)
oo               ɔ                 e  after voiced onsets          i    voiceless
                                ee                                      onsets
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Old Mon pronunciation was marked by disappearance of the short
<u>vs.</u> long contrasts, as each short vowel apparently hastened to merge
with some phonetically adjacent long vowel. Also *uə and *iə became
monophthongs. The vowel systems of both the modern spoken languages
have undergone violent rearrangements.

No details have as yet been worked out showing the appropriateness of this framework for any other Mon-Khmer language. Shorto assumes that numerous roots in the proto-language exhibited vowel alternations. The recent publication of A lexicon of Khmer Morphology by Jenner and Pou makes clear the extent of such variation in this one language. The entry for each root contains a list of all other entries that are reasonably similar in sound and meaning; in many instances these show only vowel differences with near synonymy. The degree of such variation and the uncertainty as to which alternatives are candidates for comparison in historical reconstruction make the extension of the Shorto system to other languages somewhat problematic. It will be discouraging if ever more and more Mon-Khmer roots seem to exhibit a wide range of proto-vowels interchanging in ways we have no means of accounting for.

A preliminary attempt to fit Vietnamese into the Shorto framework is set forth below. For some of the presumed proto-phonemes, I have as yet no compelling Vietnamese reflex. Furthermore, it is clear that many Vietnamese developments require something other than what can be established on the basis of Khmer and Mon alone. Consider for example the following set for which those two languages agree completely:

	Old Mon	Spoken Mon	Written Khmer	Spoken Khmer	Việt
new	*tmi?	tami	kəmɔe?	thmī	thmɣɣ	mời
3	*pi?	pi?	pɔe?	pī	bɣɣ	ba
earth	*ti?	ti?	tɔe?	tī	dɣɣ	đất

(In the last example, the Vietnamese word is very likely not directly

comparable. Since there is other evidence that the proto-language

had variation in the final consonant between *ti? and *tik, it may well

have had *tit as well. Thavung, a language in the same (Mường) group

as Vietnamese has /atak/; a final *k is implied also by Souei /ktɛɛ'/

and Bru /kuteiq/. Both /thɛɛ/ from final *? and /ndik/ are found in

Tin.)

At any rate, a great deal more work is required before any clear

picture of the overall development of the Vietnamese vowel system can

emerge. Present data allow only an outline of likely principal

developments and a very few of the conditioned shifts, which were

probably quite numerous.

In what follows comparison is generally to written Khmer. Possible

disambiguating Mon forms are supplied, if they could be found, where

a merger has obscured the source of the Khmer vowel. Since the correspondence

have been worked out only for these two languages, other documentation

is not likely to be helpful here.

a. Examples before Proto-Mon-Khmer oral consonants:

Việt		PMK				
/ /		*	Việt	Gloss	Written Khmer	Spoken Mon
u	<	*uu	run	worm	brūn	
	<	*u	run	shake	grun	

Since there are two nearly certain examples, it seems there
was a special development of *u before *y.

uə	<	*u(y)	ruồi	housefly	ruy		
			đuôi	tail	kɔnduy		
uə	<	*uə	vuốt	rub	buət		
ô	<	*oo	bội	to multiply	bor	overflowing	pò plentiful
o	<	*o	cong	bend	koŋ		kaŋ
here[aŭ͡m][4]							
	<	*ɔɔ	ròng	pure	rɔ̄ŋ		

No convincing example of *ɔ.

a	<	*aa	đan	weave	tpā̄ɲ		
ừə	<	*aa(k)	nước	water		Old Mon	dā̱k
ă	<	*a	bắn	shoot	paɲ		
i	<	*ii	chín	ripe	ch?in		cin
	<	*i	lìm	disappear	lɯm	dim	
ừ [ɯ]	*i(ŋ)		cứng	hard	kɯŋ		——
iə	<	*iə	miết	crush	sbiət		
ê	<	*əə	đến	come	tɤn	get up	
??	*ee		thêm	in addition	thɛm		——[5]
â [ʌ]	*ə		đập	dam	dɔp	stop up	hədɒp close
e [ɛ]	*e		tréo	crossed	slɛv		həle oblique

No example located suggests *ai.

Khmer has no historical Mon-Khmer sources for ɯə, so that when
Vietnamese ừơ [ɯə] and Khmer ɯə match up, it seems always to be the
case that Khmer has borrowed the Vietnamese word. (Cf. Sakamoto, 1977.)

b. Examples before *h.

(In the Shorto schema the possibilities occurring before laryngeal consonants are more limited than elsewhere.)

u	< *uuh	ủ	to warm	sʔuḥ	stuffy		
ə̆	< *uh	lə̃̌	hole	luḥ	perforate	kəlɒh	perforate
	< *oh	lə̃̌	lose in business	loḥ	ransom	lᵌh	come unwound
o	< *ooh	bǒ	toss	poḥ	throw	puh	shoot with a pellet bow
	< *ɔh	gõ̌	knock	goḥ	Chrau	gə̆h	
a	< *ah	vǎ	slap	p̈aḥ			
e	< *eh	rẽ	split	reḥ	carve out		

No example located suggests *ih.

c. Examples before *ʔ or without a final consonant:

uə	< *uʔ	lúa	rice(crop)	srūv		sɒʔ	
o	< *ɔ	mo	spathe	khbɔ̄			
a	< *aʔ	há	open one's mouth	hā̃			
i	? *iʔ	ri	spirit medium	varī	custodian (Old Khmer)	kari	guide (Middle Mon)
ê	? *e	bê	calf			həbeʔ	goat
				bɔbɛ	goat suggests *ee		

Only á < *aʔ is common.

One correspondence suggests the existence of *uəʔ, not provided for by Shorto.

uə	< *uəʔ	úa	faded	ʔuə	stale

Shorto's reconstruction of *uu?, *ii?, rather than *aw, *ay,

(1046, 1047, 1062) may still be open to question. In several

branches of Mon-Khmer some languages show diphthongs and others

monophthongs. The same is true even between dialects of Vietnamese.

It is also interesting to note that only *uu? and *ii? develop

without a final glottal stop in Mon. These correspondences are

fairly common.

*uu?	cháu	grandchild	cau
*uu	sau	after	krau
	sâu	deep	jrau
*ii?	chấy	head louse	cai
*ii	ngày	day	thŋai

The differences between <u>au</u> and <u>âu</u>, <u>ay</u> and <u>ây</u>, as the Vietnamese

reflexes, seem not to be systematic. One should recall that the

Vietnamese word for 'this' is Northern <u>này</u>, Southern <u>nầy</u>.

As we learn more about Mon-Khmer historical phonology, some

long-standing etymologies invoked to show the relation of Vietnamess

will require reinterpretation.

The Vietnamese word for 'foot', <u>chân</u>, is not directly connected

to the common Mon-Khmer etymon as seen in Written Khmer <u>jɤŋ</u>, Old Mon

<u>juṅ</u>, but only to the form found in the Northern Aslian languages of

the Malay peninsula (formerly know as Semang) such as Jehai /can/

(Benjamin 1976, 107). Vietnamese <u>đá</u> 'rock, stone' has a possible

exact cognate in Written Khmer <u>tā</u> 'flat expanse of rock', but the

usual Mon-Khmer word represented by Written Khmer <u>thmɔ̃</u>, Old Mon

tmo' can be related only by assuming not only an -m- infix--
common in Mon Khmer--but also a different original vowel.
The non-agreement of the final t in đất 'earth' was mentioned
earlier.

N o t e s

Since the material provided by Luce goes so far in providing a
general view of Mon-Khmer commonalities in basic vocabulary, it
seemed appropriate to list here additional Vietnamese items that
are relevant to the comparisons, and also some (given in parentheses)
that do not really share a Mon-Khmer history with the forms they
accompany, or at least should be viewed with caution. Numbers are
those of his list.

1. 2	vài	a couple	135. thread	sợi; lụa silk		
2. 3	ba		136. fig tree	si	sp. banyan	
6. 7	bảy		139. sky	trên	upon	
14. ye	bay		147. wind	gió		
20. father	bố		152. hole	lỗ		
21. mother	má		157. silver(tiền is Sino-Vietnamese)			
36. ear	tai		162. village(tỉnh SV though irregular)			
45. breasts	vú		168. pot	lọ		
70. elephant(tượng is Sino-Vietnamese)			171. sweep	phủi	dust off	
71. tiger	khái [obsolete]		186. far	ngái		
voi 'elephant' related to some forms			200. this	này		
77. squirrel	sóc		205. borrow	vay		
31. butterfly	buớm		206. bury	đắp	cover	
34. crab(tôm with Bru asuom 'shrimp')			211. dream	mở		
39. peafowl	công		(mộng is Sino-Vietnamese)			
95. ant	mọt	termite	213. to fly	bay		
(mối with Katu kamuar Khasi kber)			219. lick	lười tongue [?]		
105. fruit	trái		223. in pain	chịu	endure	
110. thatch grass tranh			224. weave	đan		
113. bamboo(trúc is Sino-Vietnamese)			227. go home	về		
115. hill field	rẫy		229. putrid	thối likely the reflex		
116. paddy	lúa		(rather than hỏi cf.Northern Khmu? huur)			
122. taro	[khoai] sọ		235. soak	thấm		
134. cotton	vải					

Some of the Vietnamese forms given accord with only one among the
entries cited by Luce for a given number.

2   Particularly I question items 18, 37, 75, which are Sino-Vietnamese,
96, an earlier borrowing from Chinese, and 56, 67, and 86, where the
orher examples show hardly any resemblance to Vietnamese. His 46 'to tear'
is possible if xác-xờ 'ragged' be substituted for xé. Several others
posit correspondences not otherwise supported.

3   The phonetics for Vietnamese given here is essentially an abstraction
based on the orthography. As a reality it can be heard in the studied
pronunciation of some educated Southern speakers who partially imitate
Northerners when trying to make clear the identity of the words they
are mentioning.

4   The problem of the most perspicacious phonemic notation for Vietnamese
has little relevance to the present discussion and will simply be ignored.
It seems clear that at one time ong words must have had a pronunciation
[ɔŋ]. It may be that o < *ə is a regular Vietnamese development in some
circumstances, paralleling the Khmer merger of *ɔ and *ə.

        o < ə   non   tender   dɔn   supple   Middle Mon ḍuin tender

5   Not only is this correspondence not confirmed by finding Old Mon ī
(or i), Spoken Mon /ɛ/ (or /i/), but, in the absence of the Khmer form,
thêm would certainly be considered a loan from Chinese and a byform of
Sino-Vietnamese thiêm 'increase' from the late Middle Chinese /t'iam/
that yields Modern tian. Possibly the Khmer and the Vietnamese are
independent loans from Chinese 添 or the Khmer (or even both) may be
from Thai /thĕɛm/ 'add'.

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