

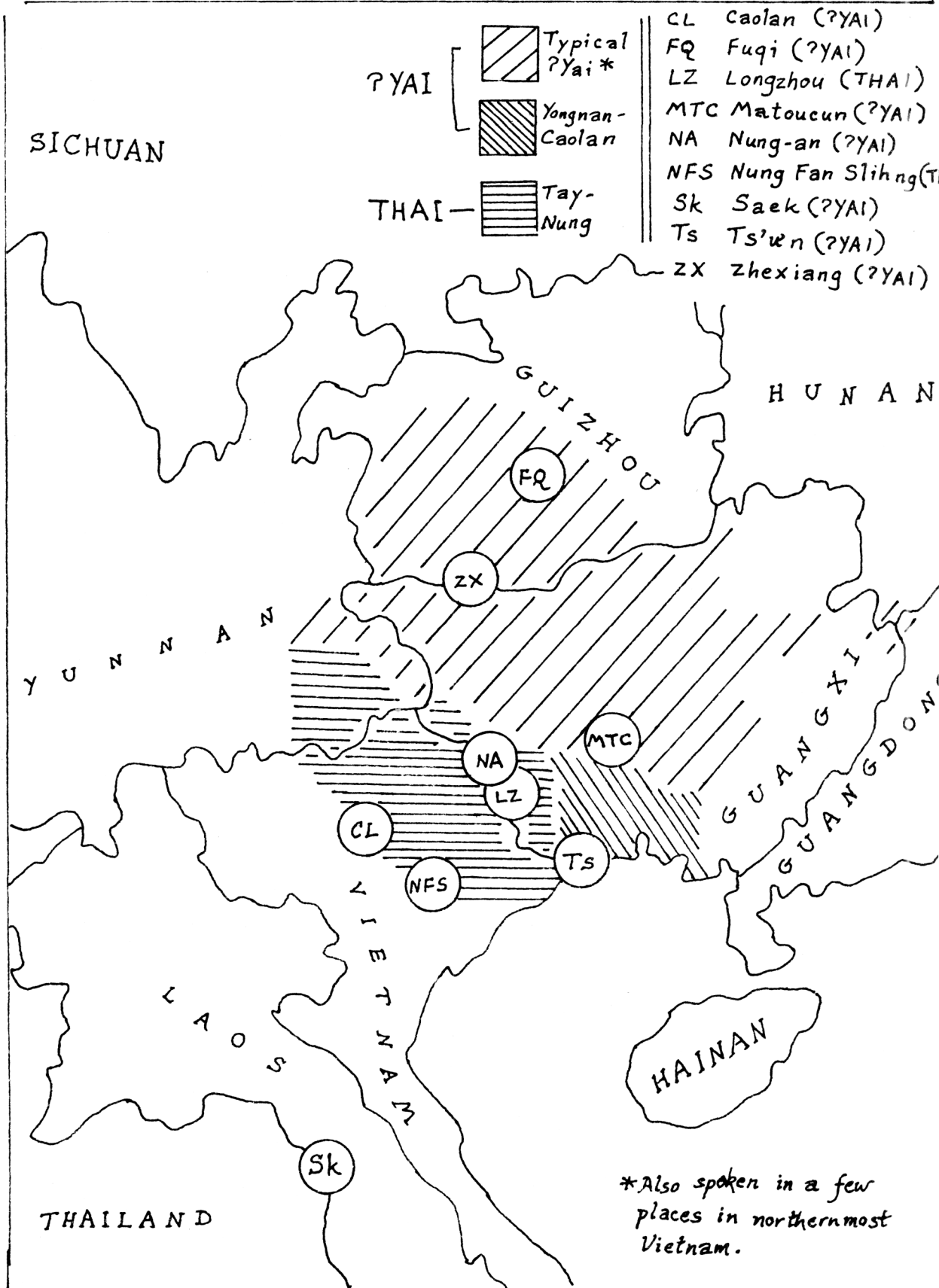
## THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE CAOLAN LANGUAGES

David Strecker

Those of us who study Tai languages are indebted to André Haudricourt for key insights on classification and phonological development which always seem to be confirmed as fuller information on the languages in question becomes available. It was Professor Haudricourt, for example, who first pointed out that Saek, although spoken in Thailand and Laos in the heart of Thai proper (Li Fang Kuei's Central and Southwestern Tai), actually belongs to the ?Yai group (Li Fang Kuei's Northern Tai). When William Gedney, inspired in part by Haudricourt's suggestion, made an intensive field study of Saek, he found that Haudricourt was exactly right.

Less dramatic but equally important is the way in which Professor Haudricourt has brought to our attention unusual dialects which we would otherwise be unaware of, either because the material on them is unpublished or because it appears in books or journals of limited circulation.

Professor Haudricourt gives us both insights on historical phonology and information on little known dialects in his article "Note sur les dialectes de la région de Moncay" (Haudricourt 1960).



In this paper I will discuss three particularly interesting dialects which Haudricourt discusses in this article: Ts'ŭn,<sup>1</sup> Caolan, and Nung-an, all spoken in northeast Vietnam. At first glance these dialects appear to fit into neither ?Yai nor Thai proper, but I will argue that they are in fact ?Yai and that, as a consequence, Li Fang Kuei's use of the development of Proto-Tai clusters as an identifying criterion for the Tay-Nung (Central Tai) subgroup of Thai proper (Li 1960) is incorrect: the development of the clusters is areal rather than genetic.

Haudricourt shows that Ts'ŭn, Caolan, and Nung-an exhibit a mixture of ?Yai and Tay-Nung traits. As an example of the former we may mention the word for 'tiger', Ts'ŭn dialect #1 kŏk<sup>4</sup>, dialect #2 kok<sub>4</sub>, Caolan kŏk, Nung-an kuk (Haudricourt 1960, section 27). This is a typical ?Yai word, not found in Thai proper, which uses a different word (\*smə<sup>A</sup>) (cf. Li 1959:18).

Another example is the word for 'rice'. In ?Yai this word has the tone which developed from tone C after voiced initial consonants (\*ɣaw<sup>C</sup>) whereas in Thai proper this word has the tone which developed from tone C after voiceless aspirates and fricatives (\*khaw<sup>C</sup>) (Li 1957:319 and see Gedney 1979:23).

For Nung-an Haudricourt omits tones, but Ts'ŭn-wa and Caolan have the ?Yai form, that is 'rice' has the same tone as 'maternal aunt' and 'horse' (which have the C-voiced tone in all Tai dialects) and a different tone from 'in front of' and 'mountain stream' (which have the C-voiceless tone in all Tai dialects):

	Section in Haudri- court	Ts'ŭn #1	Ts'ŭn #2	Caolan
in front of	26	na <sup>1</sup>	na <sup>1</sup>	ná
mountain stream	31	yoy <sup>1</sup>	loy <sup>1</sup>	láy
rice	27	hou <sup>3</sup>	hao <sup>3</sup>	hu
maternal aunt	35	ne <sup>3</sup>	---	no
horse	35	mo <sup>3</sup>	ma <sup>3</sup>	mo

What sets these dialects apart from typical ?Yai dialects is the development of certain Proto-Tai clusters, for example those which Li Fang Kuei reconstructs as \*tr- (Table 1) and \*dl- (Table 2). In the ?Yai dialects \*tr- generally falls together with \*t- so that 'eye' and 'to die' have the same initial as

Table 1: The development of Proto-Tai \*tr- in Ts'un-wa

	Li's initial	Nung Fan Slihng (Tay-Nung)	Ts'un #1	Zhe- xiang (?Yai)	Matoucun (?Yai)
door	*t-	tú	tqo <sup>3</sup>	tu <sup>1</sup>	tau 33
eye	*tr-	tha <sup>?</sup>	tha <sup>3</sup>	ta <sup>1</sup>	ra 33
to die	*tr-	thai <sup>?</sup>	thai <sup>3</sup>	tai <sup>1</sup>	rai 33

Sources:

Proto-Tai initials: Li, 1977, sections 6.1, 7.3.

Nung Fan Slihng: Freiburger and Bé (1976).

Ts'un-wa: Haudricourt, 1960, sections 34, 30.

Zhexiang: Chinese Academy of Sciences, dialect point #6, items  
# 0462, 0401, 0407.

Matoucun (Wuming) : Li (1956).

'door', as seen for example in Zhexiang. By contrast, in Ts'un-wa, Caolan, and Nung-an 'eye' and 'to die' have initial th (Haudricourt 1960, section 30), a development characteristic of certain Tay-Nung dialects, for example Nung Fan Slihng.

Table 2: The development of Proto-Tai \*dl- in Ts'un-wa.

	Li's initial	Long- zhou (Tay-Nung)	Ts'un #1	Zhe- xiang (?Yai)	Fuqi (?Yai)
blood	*l-	liit	lut <sub>4</sub>	li:t <sup>8</sup>	lu:t <sup>8</sup>
wind (n.)	*dl-	lum	lom <sub>1</sub>	zum <sup>2</sup>	lum <sup>2</sup>
vomit	*r-	laak	yuk <sub>4</sub>	zvuə <sup>6</sup>	zu:? <sup>7</sup>
house	*r-	liin	yaan <sub>1</sub>	zan <sup>2</sup>	zan <sup>2</sup>

Sources:

Proto-Tai initial, Longzhou: Li, 1977, sections 8.1, 7.6, 8.3.

Ts'un-wa: Haudricourt, 1960, sections 26, 32.

Zhexiang, Fuqi: Chinese Academy of Sciences, 1959, dialect  
points #6 and 23, items # 0621, 0382, 0389, 0307.

The situation with regard to \*dl- is similar to that with regard to \*tr-. As a general rule, in ?Yai dialects \*dl- falls together with \*r- (so that 'wind' has the same initial as 'to vomit' and 'house') whereas in Thai proper \*dl- falls together with \*l- (so that 'wind' has the same initial as 'blood'). (See Li 1977, section 7.6.) The first development is seen in the ?Yai dialect Zhexiang, the second in the Tay-Nung dialect Longzhou. Ts'un-wa, Caolan, and Nung-an merge \*dl- with \*l-, just as in Thai proper (Haudricourt 1960, section 32).

For these reasons Haudricourt, in his 1960 article, put Ts'un-wa, Caolan, and Nung-an into a separate branch of the Tai family which in a later article (Haudricourt 1967, section 17)

he labelled "caolan". But in personal correspondence (May 1982) Professor Haudricourt says that he now regards Ts'u'n-wa, Caolan, and Nung-an as ?Yai languages, despite the Tay-Nung-like development of the clusters.<sup>2</sup> I would now like to present some of the evidence which supports Professor Haudricourt's newer view.

The argument is that the development of the clusters does not exclude the Caolan languages from ?Yai because several undisputed ?Yai dialects also have aberrant developments of these clusters. First of all, a few undisputed ?Yai dialects, for example Matoucun (the dialect which Li calls Wuming), keep \*t- and \*tr- apart. (See Li 1977, section 7.3.) This suggests that \*t- and \*tr- must still have been distinct in Proto-?Yai although they subsequently fell together in the majority of dialects. Therefore Ts'u'n-wa, Caolan, and Nung-an could be ?Yai dialects which were in contact with Tay-Nung at a time when they still preserved Proto-?Yai \*tr- and subsequently changed \*tr- to th-by areal convergence to Tay-Nung.

Similarly, a few undisputed ?Yai dialects, for example Fuqi, merge \*dl- with \*l- rather than with \*r- (see Chinese Academy of Sciences 1959, page 108, initial 3.3). Thus we must assume that the cluster \*dl- persisted into Proto-?Yai and that in Ts'u'n-wa, Caolan, and Nung-an it subsequently fell together with \*l- by areal

convergence to the Tay-Nung dialects.<sup>3</sup>

Dialects with the same mixed characteristics as Ts'u'n-wa, Caolan and Nung-an are also spoken on the Chinese side of the border, in the southwest corner of Guangxi, and are referred to by Chinese writers as the South Yong subdialect (Yōngnán tǔyǔ) of the Zhuang language. Material on these dialects has been appearing in recent Chinese publications such as Yuan (1963; dialect points 39-44), Wei and Qin (1980:90-91), Chang (1980), and Liang (1982). This newer material provides additional evidence for the conclusions we have already reached on the basis of Professor Haudricourt's material.

Thus I conclude that Ts'u'n-wa, Caolan, and Nung-an are ?Yai languages which were in early contact with Tay-Nung and participated in certain areal changes with Tay-Nung. In a similar fashion Saek shares certain areal phonological developments with certain Thai (Southwestern Tai) languages such as Lao (Gedney 1976:7; 1978:4). Professor Haudricourt's interest in the unusual Caolan languages has enabled us to refine our reconstruction of Proto-?Yai. This reconstruction in turn gives us a better understanding of the way in which Proto-Tai first split into dialects and of what Proto-Tai itself was like.



## NOTES

1. Haudricourt (1960, sections 19, 28) says that the people are called Ts'ŭn-lao 'villagers' ("habitants des hameaux") and the language is called Ts'ŭn-wa. These are apparently Chinese names, cf. Cantonese chyŭn 'village', Mandarin lǎo 'uncultured person, rustic', Cantonese wá 'language' (Karlgren 1923, # 1113, 862; Chen 1970; Liang et al. 1972, #158).
2. Benedict (1975: xix and passim) also regards the Caolan group as part of ?Yai (Northern Tai).
3. Li's \*dl-, by the way, does not seem to remain as a cluster in any dialect. It always merges with either \*l- or \*r-. Yuan (1963) has an alternative proposal: he reconstructs a front-r, \*r-, for Li's \*dl-, and a back-r, \*ɣ-, for Li's \*r-.

## REFERENCES

Benedict, Paul K. 1975.

Austro-Thai Language and Culture: with a Glossary of Roots  
(with a foreword by Ward H. Goodenough). HRAF Press.

Chang Junru. 1980.

"A Tentative Study of the Categories of Initials of Proto-Tai" (in Chinese), Minzu Yuwen 1980:2:31-40.

Chen, Janey. 1970.

A Practical English-Chinese Pronouncing Dictionary. By  
Janey Chen in collaboration with Ena G. Simms, Charles E.  
Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont & Tokyo, Japan.

Chinese Academy of Sciences. 1959.

Bùyī Yǔ Diàochá Bàogào [Report on the Investigation of the  
Bouyei Language]. Minorities Language Research Institute,  
Academy of Sciences, Peking.

Freiberger, Nancy and Vy thi Bé. 1976.

Nung Fan Slihng Vocabulary. Minority Languages of Vietnam  
Series, volume 9, part 1, Summer Institute of Linguistics,  
MSEA Publications, P.O. Box 2270, Manila, Philippines  
2801/Huntington Beach, CA 92648, USA.

Gedney, William J. 1976.

"Saek Final -l: Archaism or Innovation?", Ninth International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Copenhagen.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1978.

"Speculations on Early Tai Tones", Eleventh International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, University of Arizona, Tucson.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1979.

"Evidence for Another Series of Voiced Initials in Proto-Tai", Twelfth International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Paris.

Haudricourt, André G. 1960.

"Note sur les dialectes de la région de Moncay", Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient 50:161-177; reprinted in Haudricourt (1972:209-233).

\_\_\_\_\_. 1967.

"La langue lakia", Bulletin de la Société Linguistique de Paris 62:165-182; reprinted in Haudricourt (1972:261-281).

Haudricourt, André G. 1972.

Problèmes de phonologie diachronique. Langues et civilisations à tradition orale, 1, Société pour l'étude des langues africaines, SELAF, 5 rue de Marseille - 75010 Paris.

Karlgren, Bernhard. 1923.

Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese. Dover reprint edition, unabridged and unaltered, New York, 1974 (originally published by the Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris).

Li Fang-kuei. 1956.

The Tai Dialect of Wu-ming (texts, translations, and glossary). (In Chinese.) Academia Sinica, Institute of History and Philology Monographs Series A, No. 19, Taipei.

---

. 1957.

"The Jui Dialect of Po-ai and the Northern Tai", Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, volume XXIX, Studies Presented to Yuen Ren Chao on his Sixty-fifth Birthday, pages 315-322.

Li Fang-kuei. 1959.

"Classification by Vocabulary: Tai Dialects", Anthropological Linguistics 1:2:15-21.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1960.

"A Tentative Classification of Tai Dialects", in S. Diamond, editor, Culture and History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin, pages 951-959.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1977 .

A Handbook of Comparative Tai. Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications No. 15, The University Press of Hawaii.

Liang Min. 1982.

"Zhuàngyǔ xīngróngcí, míngcí, dòngcí hòu fù yīnjié de yánjiù" [A Study of Adjectival, Nominal, and Verbal Suffixes in Zhuang], in Editorical Department of Minzu Yuwen, editors, Mínzú Yǔwén Yánjiù Wēnzí [Collected Studies on the Languages of the Nationalities], Qinghai Nationalities Press, pages 284-308.

Liang Shih-chiu, editor in chief, and Chu Liang-chen, David Shao, Jeffrey C. Tung, and Lu-sheng Chong, editors. 1972.

A New Practical Chinese-English Dictionary. The Far East Book Co., Ltd., 66-1 Chungking Road, S. Sec. 1, Taipei, Taiwan.

Wei Qingwen and Qin Guosheng. 1980.

Zhuàngyǔ Jiǎnzè [A Sketch of the Zhuang Language]. Chinese Ethnic Minority Language Sketch Series, "National People's Commission Nationalities Question Five Races Series", part one, Nationalities Press.

Yuan Jiahua. 1963.

"Tóngyǔ /r/ de fāngyīn duì yǐng" [Dialect Reflexes of /r/ in Zhuang], Yuyanxue Luncong 5:187-218.