MORE ON VIET-MUONG TONAL DEVELOPMENTS

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Since my attempt in 1973 to reconstruct the phonology of the ancestor of Vietnamese and Muong (Thompson 1976), considerable new information on this family has become available. In particular, Michel Ferlus has presented an admirable series of papers in which he provides data for some previously little known languages that are clearly related to Vietnamese, although apparently less closely than Muong Khen, on which my study had to depend, there being then no other language of the family represented by data of any extent in a consistent transcription. His first-hand experience with these languages and several others of the area provide the basis for a fine reassessment of the research. We shall note here his review of the composition of the family (Ferlus 1974a) and his overview of reconstruction with discussion of several important developments (Ferlus 1975). In the latter paper he gives quite extensive material from Thavung [t'vw'n], enriching the material offered in another paper (Ferlus 1974b) on consonantal mutations in that language. It is heartening to find that much of what it seemed possible to propose in 1973 is confirmed by independent study that was being conducted during the same period. On the other hand, the interesting material from Thavung and other languages calls for a reconsideration of my reconstruction, which I hope it will be possible to accomplish before long. This is not the place to undertake an extensive review of the implications of these new studies, but it seems appropriate to explore immediately some points which the new data bring up.

Ferlus (1974a:70-1) proposes a classification of the family into four subgroups, one containing Thavung along with two or three less well known languages, a second including several poorly recorded dialects (primarily older material), a third containing Muong and another language in several little known dialects, and the fourth Vietnamese. Since the tones of most of these languages are inconsistently noted (or not noted at all), we cannot at this juncture tell much about how they compare with the tonal systems of Vietnamese, Muong, and Thavung, which are all now clearly described. Data are also too skimpy for systematic comparison of those other languages in other respects, too, but it is possible to get some general impressions. Even without full reconstruction, which is now a good ways in the future, I believe we can recognize some shared innovations which would set Muong (and perhaps the other language in Ferlus' third subgroup) and Vietnamese off from the rest of the family. In any case, they are clearly set apart from Thavung.
What is perhaps most interesting in this connection is the very
different aspect of the tonal system of Thavung from that of Vietnamese
and Muong. Ferlus (1974b:314) notes Thavung tones with raised numerals
and describes the tones as follows:

| Série haute | 1° haut plain | 3° haut glottal |
| Série basse | 2° bas plain   | 4° bas glottal  |

He points out (1974b:316ff) that the level tones accompany not only
syllables with final vowels and sonorants but also those with final stops
and fricatives (−s and −h). These latter syllables correspond to syllables in Vietnamese and Muong with C tones, thus providing consistent
support for Haudricourt's (1954) hypothesis of tone and final relationships. The glottal tones, on the other hand, correspond quite regularly
to Vietnamese and Muong B tones, and quite consistently to syllables with
final glottal stop in Khmu, again supporting Haudricourt's theory. Now
the high tones of Thavung correspond to the first register tones of
Vietnamese and Muong, and the low tones to the second register tones of
those languages, just as the theory would have it--higher pitch being
a natural concomitant of original voiceless initial consonants, lower
pitch going with original voiced initials. It is not clear what Ferlus
means by glottal tone, but we may at least expect that it involves some
feature which could be analyzed as −ʔ. With such a view the tonal system
becomes two-term, high vs. low, a simple register system. Even without
the reanalysis of the glottal tones, it is quite clear that the register
opposition is already established, while the second contour, the B type
tone, is just emerging, and C type has yet to develop (speaking from the
point of view of the fully developed contour-systems of Muong and Viet-
namese). Now this is counter to Haudricourt's hypothesis, according to
which the contour tones were thought to have developed first, their number
subsequently being doubled by the development of registers as the initial
voiced-voiceless contrast was merged. Or, speaking historically, Thavung
makes clear that Proto-Viet-Muong must be reconstructed with final fricatives (or something from which they develop in Thavung), and the estab-
lishment of C tones and the development of the contour systems was an
innovation in the subgroup to which both Muong and Vietnamese must belong.
In fact, it seems likely that Proto-Viet-Muong was not a tone language at
all. I suspect that fuller material will make it possible to show that
Proto-Viet-Muong developed a Mon-Khmer type register system which elabo-
rated vocalic differences in the two registers, and the tonal developments
came later. In the subgroup to which Muong and Vietnamese belong, the
tone systems may well have developed as Haudricourt supposed, and the con-
tour tones resulting from the loss of certain finals may have preceded
the register split, although even here there are some doubts about when
the C type tone emerged, and Gregerson and Thomas (1976) study the evidence
and conclude that even the Vietnamese tone system may have begun with the
register contrast.
Not surprisingly, there are a number of cases among the etymologies Ferlus cites in which the tone correspondences are not what is expected. I have shown that most of the discrepancies of tone register between Muong Khen and Vietnamese are taken care of as a by-product of the pre-syllables I proposed to explain the development in Vietnamese of voiced fricatives from original stops (Thompson 1976:1132ff). It is less easy to account for register discrepancies between Thavung and Vietnamese; Ferlus regards this as natural if the languages are more remotely related. But it again has an interesting implication for the history of register development in the family.

In the etymologies involving registral differences between Vietnamese and Thavung (culled from Ferlus' two papers presenting Thavung data) there are the two expected types. Where Thavung has a high tone (that is, first register) corresponding to Vietnamese second register tone (18 etymologies) there at first seems no rationale to the differences. However, I noted an interesting fact in surveying all the forms cited: the overwhelming majority of the Thavung words have first register tones; moreover, so far as I can see, there is only one Thavung word beginning with a sonorant having a second register tone (the word for 'mother', mA⁴; 1974b:316).⁴ We can include here words that earlier had *r, which has developed to h in Thavung. The hypothesis suggests itself that Thavung may have treated initial sonorants in the same way as initial voiceless obstruents, so far as the concomitant pitch was concerned. One explanation could be that in initial position voiceless consonants are unmarked in this language, while voiced obstruents are marked; sonorants, naturally voiced, are also unmarked, and there seems to be no suggestion of historical voiced vs. voiceless sonorants in initial position, although other languages of the area do show such an opposition. The fact that *r developed to voiceless h- also fits logically with these facts. In any case, if syllables with initial sonorants normally have first register tones, six of our 18 discrepancies are taken care of. Now another interesting fact is that Thavung presyllables apparently have the shape CV- and although several obstruents can fill the C-position, only one sonorant (m-) can (Ferlus 1974b:314). We may suspect that the proto-language permitted other sonorants in this position and they were lost in Thavung; these account for a number of the cases where Ferlus (1975:32ff) has to go outside Thavung to show cognates with presyllables corresponding to initial voiced fricatives in Vietnamese. It appears likely that several cases where Thavung has the presyllable (?)- an original sonorant was involved. Seven more of the discrepant etymologies would seem to require reconstruction of some presyllable, because Vietnamese shows a voiced fricative initial, but Thavung shows (?)- or no presyllable. One case shows the presyllable m- (i.e. m-?). If these all had earlier sonorant initials, then again the first register tone would be explained. The remaining cases are Thavung jol³ 'arise' (Vietnamese zay.), Tv hhŋ³ 'body louse' (Middle Vn rẹn.), Tv pɔcɔŋ¹ 'husband' (Vn cɔwŋ'), and Tv tɔpah¹ 'slap' (MVn ɓa~; but modern dictionaries show va'). Ferlus reconstructs *j (preglottalized) for the initial in the first item; if we reconstruct rather *v-, as the
Vietnamese and Muong evidence seem to suggest (cf. Thompson 1976:1191 under 'wake, rise, get up'), we would have again a sonorant initial. 'Body louse' is xən in the Khen dialect of Muong; I reconstructed *grən B, which is now cast in doubt. Ferlus cites Khuu mbriŋ as cognate, which suggests another sonorant presyllable. 'Husband' is troublesome because Thavung shows a presyllable, yet Vietnamese did not develop the expected voiced fricative. This and other examples indicate that certain types of presyllables must have been lost earlier in the history of Vietnamese than those which set the stage for intervocalic voicing and spiran-
tization. The final example might be explained as developing from a PVM *depah, with voicing assimilation of the initial in Thavung. That, of course, will require careful study of other cases to see whether some such voicing assimilation does operate.

The second type of discrepancy in register correspondences involves second register tones in Thavung but first register tones in Vietnamese. There are fewer examples in the material (12), but explanations are far more difficult to come by. Six cases show high vowels in Thavung (four cases of u, two of i), and relatively higher vowels is a characteristic of second register syllables in Mon-Khmer (cf. Gregerson 1976). Four others show diphthongization of the -iə-, -ʊə- type in Vietnamese, which might suggest first register adaptation. But both of these characteristics are found with the opposing registers in the material at hand. More material and careful study will be necessary to see better what may have caused these differences. If second register is indeed uncommon in Thavung, these forms in which Thavung shows unexpected second register are especially interesting.

The facts that we have had recourse to in our attempt to explain registral discrepancies lead us outside the domain of tone and serve to emphasize, I believe, that there are other respects in which Muong and Vietnamese may share innovations. It may be, then, that one direction for revision of my reconstruction is toward a proto-language for that subgroup. We have pre-empted Proto-Viet-Muong for the common ancestor of all these languages; Ferlus (1975:23) introduces the term 'Viet-muong commun' or 'pré-viet-muong' for any reconstruction utilizing only Vietnamese and Muong evidence. It is important to emphasize the specific reference of the second term in particular, because many comparatists will otherwise understand it as referring to that period before the time of Proto-Viet-Muong. Probably we need a different term; we can perhaps make do with Proto-Muong-Vietnamese for the common ancestor of those two languages if it turns out to be a needed concept.
NOTES

1 That this work was concurrent and independent is less than obvious from publication dates. I was unaware of Ferlus' work on the Viet-Muong family when I prepared the final version of my paper in 1973. On the other hand, when he prepared his reconstruction overview (published in 1975) he had only the preliminary conference version of my paper, which was considerably less insightful than (I hope) the published version is. In particular, I had not yet worked out the dynamics of spirantization of original stops in Vietnamese when they fell between the vowel of a presyllable and that of the main syllable, and Ferlus' 1975 paper offers a very similar hypothesis.

2 It is a special pleasure to be able to offer this small contribution in honor of Professor Henderson, who has done so much pioneering work with the languages of this area and has contributed so importantly to our understanding of tone and register phenomena.

3 I had hoped to be able to uncover some patterns of vocalic developments relating to register in the available material comparing Thavung and Vietnamese, but they remain elusive.

4 Thavung forms are cited here in Ferlus' transcription except that I have omitted the breve mark over ə in presyllables. Vietnamese forms are cited according to the same system I used in my reconstruction (Thompson 1976).

REFERENCES


ICONICITY OF VOWEL QUALITIES IN NORTHEASTERN THAI REDUPLICATED WORDS

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1. Introduction

Several types of reduplication in languages spoken in Southeast Asia have been reported by Haas (1942 and 1946), Banker (1964), Smith (1973), Diffloth (1976 and also in this book) and Jacob (in this book). The use of reduplication is also common in the Isan dialects, i.e., the Thai dialects spoken in the northeastern region of Thailand. Reduplicated words are normally used as intensifiers and pluralisers. The iconic value of vowel qualities in reduplicated words are of particular interest.

Firth (1930) draws to our attention the relationship between vowel qualities and their suggestive meanings. He states:

When the consonantal link is etymemic or phonaesthetic, vocalic heterophony will also have some sort of function. Vowel variation in otherwise similar phonetic sequences is a common verbal device in English and other Germanic languages—e.g. drink, drank, drunk, sink, sink, sunk. ... Vowel variation is widely used for other purposes in most Germanic languages. We sometimes vary the vowels to suit in some way the varied aspects of similar actions—e.g. the verbs drip, drop, droop. Why should the first sort of action and oo the third, it is possible to guess—but we must beware of sound symbolism...

The use of reduplication, of ee and oo sounds, and the liquid l r n m sounds as intensives, as diminutives associated with reiteration, or with affectionate, or pejorative feelings or regard for the picturesque, will account for much of what is loosely called onomatopoeia.¹

The iconicity of vowel qualities in Isan reduplicated words may be used as evidence to support Firth's interesting comments on sound symbolism. The analysis in this article, which is based on the Muaong Sam Sip dialect (MSS) spoken in Ban Bua Yang, Tambon Dum Yai, Amphoe Muang Sam Sip in Ubon Rachathani Province, and the many examples of reduplication found in the Isan-Central Thai Dictionary by Somdet Phramaha Wirawong Titsamahathera, et al. (1972) and also Nimmanahaeminda