OKhm. ʿw–, ʿy–, ʿN–

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In a number of contributions A.V.N. Diller has referred to the presence of native speakers of Khmer in 14th / 15th Sukhothai.[1] In addition, he has proposed the hypothesis that a contemporaneous variety of Northern Thai was more extensively exposed to Mon influence whereas Sukhothai Thai, further to the south, shows greater traces of Khmer, thus in effect arguing for a kind of 'differential AA contact'. I cannot argue here and now in detail if evidence for this assumption is sufficient and whether this precludes the hypothesis proposed by myself, and currently in press elsewhere, that early forms of Thai, specifically at Sukhothai, have a predominantly Mon substratum, thereby implying that a Mon–speaking population must have been present in central and northern Thailand at the time.[2]

Diller's contribution referred to, and quoted in the following, deals—it should be stated in fairness to its author—with the historical development, phonologically, orthographically and palæographically, of a lexically contrastive preglottalized semivowel and its non–glottalized counterpart, *ʔy/ and */y/, in Tai and their reflexes in Northern and early Central (?) Sukhothai Thai. Diller argues that the opposition had been maintained at Sukhothai—due to presumed Khmer influence —but lost in Northern Thai—presumably due to Mon.

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[1] "Tai scripts and Proto–Tai the case of palatal continuants", first presented at the *Second International Symposium on Language and Linguistics*, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 8–11 October 1988; my remarks are based on the published version which has appeared in the conference proceedings, Bankgok: Thammasat University Press, 1992, pp. 228–247. See also his remarks in the abstracts published in Vol. IV [abstracts] of the proceedings of the *Third International Symposium on Language and Linguistics (Pan–Asiatic Linguistics)*, Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University, 8–10 January 1992 [proceedings vol. IV:35]: "A form of Thai–Khmer linguistic interaction will be proposed which, it is argued, gave rise to a (possibly toneless) hybrid "Khmero–Thai" contact language—or even to a "Khmero–Thai" creole. This may be counted as one of the ancestors of modern Standard Thai."

[2] Diller actually assumes, as most writers on the subject, that northern Thailand was indeed inhabited by Mon: "... a good share of the 14th century population of the Lan Na area, specially near Lamphun, would—one presumes—have come from a Mon–speaking milieu, or perhaps from other Austroasiatic groups" (1992, *Scripts* ..., p.242).

To quote Diller:

> Might the retention of preglottalized semivowel in SK [sc. Sukhothai] speech, but its loss in Tai varieties of the LN [sc. northern Thai] area, be explained in part by differential Austroasiatic contact? For Khmer, Jenner has hypothesised a series of preglottalized consonants, including continuants such as semivowels and nasals. [...] Khmer coming to use spoken Tai would have had a native speaker's motivation to preserve a preglottalized semivowel ... It would seem reasonable that a good share of the population of 14th century Sukhothai would have ultimately had Khmer speech in their backgrounds. These speakers could have contributed significantly to the preservation of preglottalization [p. 242].

The reference to Old Khmer phonology warrants further examination here.

The evidence for a presumed series of preglottalized semivowels and nasals in Old Khmer *ʔw–, *ʔy–, *ʔN– is rather tenuous. Diller relied on Jenner's reconstruction of PA Khmer based on the corpus presented in *CPAK*.[3] It seems to me that Diller may not have fully understood Jenner's reasoning: Jenner interprets initial orthographic '– as a "subphonemic vocal attack".[4] Nowhere in *CPAK* has a preglottalized series *ʔw–, *ʔy–, *ʔN– been posited as phonemic.

A different reconstruction of OKhm. consonantism had been proposed earlier by J.M. Jacob but not quoted by Diller.[5] This latter reconstruction does not include a series of preglottalized nasals and semivowels either: "In several common words there seems to be a doubt about whether it [sc. written initial vowel support, interpreted as /ʔ-/] is to be taken as present [p. 361]." She goes on to caution that "one must not forget, however, the possibility of opposition [p. 362]."

Looking at the entire OKhm. corpus, we obtain the following cases of orthographic initial '–C in the contexts under discussion [where C is a semivowel or nasal]; IA loans have been excluded:[6]

Semivowels

1.	'yak	'heavy, slow'	K 956	10th c.
2.	'yat ~ 'ayat ~ 'et	'without'	K 257	10th c.
3.	'yal	'to slip'	K 989	11th c.
4.	'yāṁ	'[?]'	K 989	11th c.
5.	'wal	'plurality [?]'	K 214	10th c.
6.	'war ~ 'wār	weight	K 258	11th c.
7.	'wāy ~ 'uy	toponym	K 257	10th c.
8.	'wai ~ wyak	'variety of rattan'	K 352	10th c.
9.	'wyaḥ	'[?]'	K 344	10th c.
•10.	'awi	'fact, object; what'	K 562	PA

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[3] *CPAK* II.

[4] *CPAK* II:356, note.

[5] The structure of the word in Old Khmer, *BSOAS*, 1960, XXIII.:351–68.

[6] Data checked against both Jenner's *CPAK* and Pou's *DVK*.

Nasals

•11.	'anak ~ 'nak ~ nāk	'person, [agentive]'	K 518	PA
12.	'nap ~ nap	'[?]'	K 713	9th c.
•13.	'nas	'[?]', name	K 115	PA
•14.	'nāc	'[?]'	K 451	PA
15.	'nit	'[?]'	K 809	9th c.
16.	'nel	'[?]'	K 207	11th c.
17.	'nau ~ 'anau ~ nau	'to stay, remain'	K 958	10th c.
•18.	'anik	name	K 133	PA
•19.	'anis	name	K 877	PA
•20.	'mac	'[?]' name ?	K 493	PA,
•21.	'mal	'[?]'	K 357	PA
22.	'mā	'uncle'	K 344	10th c.
23.	'muḥ	'boiler'	K 263	10th c.
•24.	'me ~ 'ame ~ me	'mother'	K 134	PA

[The pre–Angkorian forms are preceded by •. Only the first occurrence has been noted here.]

Other contexts

25.	'tā ~ tā	'old man'	K 451	PA
26.	'ji ~ ji	'grandparent'	K 451	PA
27.	'kān ~ kān ~ kan	[name (?)]	K 801	9th c.
28.	'alāṅ ~ lāṅ	'to wash (?) [JMJ]'	K 728	PA
28a.	lāṅ	'to wash [SP]		
28b.	'alāṅ ~ lāṅ	'adult [SP]	K 648	PA
28c.	'lāṅ ~ 'leṅ ~ 'alāṅṅ	'laterite [SP]'	K 561	PA[7]

Semivowels

(1) 'y–

With the exception of #10 none of the 'w– initials are attested prior to the 10th c. AD. Except for #4, 'y– forms are to be interpreted as encoding a diphthong, in these contexts */ʔiə/, this is especially supported by spelling variation affecting #2. #5 is equated in *DVK* with its presumed variant form 'al 'to choke'. The only problematic form is 'yām.

(2) 'w–

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[7] *e* vocalism dating from the 10th c.

More difficult to interpret are forms with '*w*–. #7 is analogous to the cases in the first group in that the semivowel is likely to encode here a diphthong instead of an postinitial consonant *Λuə ~ ?uıə/; if this is correct, then #4 '–*ā*– might also be interpreted as a diphthong. Pou glosses #7 as 'to have bad, nasty smell, to deteriorate, decay'; noteworthy is that '*uy* is the PA form. #5 also suggests some kind of diphthongization rather than –*w*–. Except for #9, #10 all cases of '*w*– are subject to variation; #10 is the only instance in which '*a*– has been accorded a syllabic status. In the context attested it occurs as a proper name. Pou regards this form in K 562 and K 76 as the earlier reflex of modern '*wī*, and adduces in her *DVK* the OKhm. derivatives '*aṁiwi* ~ '*aṁiwī* ~ *kaṁiwi* 'about, from, etc.' and 'written document' "respectively" requires at least two antecedents. Is something missing from this sentence?.

Nasals

(3) 'n–

As far as nasals are concerned, exactly half of the attested forms cannot be glossed—that is, so far modern reflexes have not been identified—or are personal names. In the case of '*n*– five cases out of nine and, for '*m*–*, three out of five date from the PA period. #11 is most probably an AN loan, although this has been disputed. #14 is equated by Pou *DVK* with modern Khmer *nāc*, #18 with modern /nuık/ 'to think [of]'. The syntactic contexts of #17 need to be carefully re-examined to see whether the presumed glottal element '– correlates with stressed positions, for example, or whether other suprasegmental factors may play a role here, as I have pointed out in the case of Mon.[8] In OKhm. '*nau* never follows a sentence–boundary but it quite frequently follows markers such as *ta*; by contrast, *nau* never follows *ta* but may follow sentence–boundaries. The only exception is *ti nau* in K 150.14 [10th c.]; *ti* is likely to be stressed here—otherwise one might expect a weak form.

(4) 'm–

#22 and #24 are kinship terms, and the variation affecting the initial in #24 'mother' suggests a syllabic status for '– */ə ~ ?ə/ which may be an appellative prefix, as it is in later varieties of Mon. In the case of 'mother' it should be noted that all three spellings are attested in the PA period. #23 is a morphologically complex form {–m–?uh}, derived from OKhm. '*uh* ~ '*us* 'to boil, warm'; the context '*muh dik sroṅ* in K 263 is glossed by Pou in *DVK* as "celui qui réchauffe l' eau des ablutions". The –*s* spelling is attested in the same inscription (K 263 [10th c.]). Loans such as '*moghapūra* [K 211.3] suggest a neutral vowel, such as /Λə–/ as a variant for /Λa–/.

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[8] *JSS* LXXIX where I have commented on the OM locative deictic term '*awo*' ~ *wo*' (and its variant forms, such as '*awo* ~ *wo*, confined to so–called Dvāravatī areas) and the systematic variation of the final glottal stop –' ˚*wo* ~ ˚*wo*'. Suprasegmental factors, such as stress, may account for variation of the type '*aw*– ~ *w*–.

Other contexts

Cases listed as #25 to #28 show the *Vokalträger* preceding stops (/k-, t-, ɟ-/) and liquids (/l-/) in variation with forms lacking the *Vokalträger*. The first three cases are confined to kin–terms and appellatives, suggesting an areal onomastic /ə-/ prefix; in the last case, #28, interpretations differ. If one follows *DVK*, we deal again with an appellative (#28b.); however, if Jacob's interpretation of 1960 is accepted, the form is problematic.

While Diller is right that a series of initial preglottalized semivowels and nasals cannot be reconstructed for Old Mon, I doubt that the instances of initial '– in the contexts of semivowels and nasals given above are sufficient to justify the reconstruction of a series of preglottalized semivowels and nasals in Old Khmer, especially in PA Khmer. If they are to be reconstructed for Khmer, they are likely to be innovations, due to contact.

Diller's idea of differential Mon–Thai and Khmer–Thai contact zones is attractive but greater care needs to be taken when adducing evidence.

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