Vietic and Việt-Mường:
a new subgrouping in Mon-Khmer

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1. From Annam to Vietic: A Brief Onomastic History.

Since the mid 19th century, a succession of names has identified the group of related South East Asian languages and dialects of which Vietnamese is by far the most important and well known.[1] The first, Annam, originated as a neologism of a Sino–Vietnamese term meaning 'The Pacified South'. The Tang dynasty of China had given this rather rude appellation to its protectorate in northern Vietnam in 679 AD, and it was subsequently used for almost 1,300 years as a common name for the entire country of Vietnam.[2]

The first to use Annam in a linguistically taxonomic sense was apparently James R. Logan, who proposed in 1856 the existence of a Mon–Annam language family, which was soon rechristened Mon–Khmer.[3] At the time, the only known member of the Annam group within Mon–Khmer was called Annamese or Annamite.[4] After it became known around 1905 that the Muong (Mường) dialects of northern Vietnam are related to Annamese, Annam was replaced as the group name by the variants, Annam(ese)–Mường, Mường–Annam, and Annamường.

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[1] Also true of the country of Vietnam. Nguyễn Văn Thái and Nguyễn Văn Mường (N&N) cite 18 names used by the Chinese and/or Vietnamese, from the mythical Xích Quỷ '[Land of the] Red Devils' (prior to 2879 BC) to Đại–Nam 'Great [Land of the] South' (1820–1945 AD).

[2] According to Fall 1967, the full designation was "The Protectorate–General of the Pacified South"; otherwise, *an nam* can be translated as 'peaceful south'. Circa 866 AD, the Chinese renamed this protectorate Tĩnh Hải 'The Pacified Sea' (N&N 1958:45). They continued, however, to use the older designation, and in 1164 AD recognized the independent Vietnamese state as the Kingdom of Annam. Certain Vietnamese rulers used this term (1164–1428 AD), but most preferred names which, though still composed of Sino–Vietnamese vocabulary, were indigenous fabrications, the most enduring being Đại–Việt 'Great (Land of the) Viet' (1054–1164, 1428–1802 AD). Under the French, Annam referred specifically to an administrative district encompassing east–central Vietnam, but was also used for the entire country. During this period, if not before, the Vietnamese came to consider Annam and Annamite as terms of contempt (N&N 1958:300).

[3] The referenced work is "Ethnology of the Indo–Pacific Islands. Part II, Chapter VI, Appendix A: Comparative vocabulary of the numerals of the Mon–Annam formation, Appendix B: Comparative vocabulary of miscellaneous words of the Mon–Annam formation", *JIA*, New Series 1.

[4] In his 1651 *Dictionarium Annammiticum, Lusitanum et Latinum*, Father Alexandre de Rhodes used 'Annamite' in one of the earliest Western references to the Vietnamese language.

As the modern Vietnamese struggle for independence intensified just after World War II, Vietnamese began to replace Annamese and Annamite around 1948.[5] This name was derived from Việt Nam, another ancient term for the country even older than Annam, which had been revived in 1802 by the Vietnamese emperor Gia Long. It is the Vietnamese form of the Sino–Vietnamese name, Nam–Việt 'The South[ern Country of the] Viet', which identified a state comprising most of northern Vietnam and parts of the Chinese provinces of Kwangsi and Kwangtung formed in 207 BC and crushed by the Han dynasty in 111 BC.[6] As Vietnamese gained currency after North and South Vietnam became indenpendent nations in 1954, Annam–Muong and the others were replaced by Vietnamuong and Viet–Muong. Since its introduction in 1966 by David Thomas, Viet–Muong has become the most widely used term, and the group it represents has been acknowledged as a branch of the Mon–Khmer subfamily of the Austroasiatic language stock.

It has become increasingly clear, however, as our knowledge of this branch's composition and history has grown over the past 25 years, that Viet–Muong is not an entirely adequate name for the branch. In response to certain ambiguities (see section 3), I introduced Vietic in 1982 as a new designation for it and limited Viet–Mường to its subgroup composed of Vietnamese and Mường (Hayes 1982:83, 1982:101, 1983:91). This new name has thus far gained some measure of acceptance among Mon–Khmerists, although the reasons for the change and choice of terminology were not publicly stated. In this paper I shall correct that omission and present some phonological and lexicostatistical evidence supporting the proposed onomastic change and new subgrouping.

2. The Current Taxonomic Situation in Vietic.

At present, our knowledge of the Vietic branch's composition is still imprecise, and its intrabranch relation on the Vietic languages as a whole, especially linguistically reliable data, has never been copious or easily accessible — a refrain that can be sung about Mon–Khmer, indeed Austroasiatic, languages in general.

Even today, adequate descriptions are generally available for only four, the Khên dialect of Mường, Rục, Thavưng [t'əvɨŋ], and Vietnamese, of the 30 languages and dialects named by Michel Ferlus in his 1979 classification. Comprehensive dictionaries have been published only for Vietnamese, but an unedited Mường Khên dictionary (Barkers 1976) is available on microfiche. The

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[5] The earliest usage of the term in a linguistic publication seems to be Lê Văn Lý's *Le Parler Vietnamien*, Imprimerie–Editions Huang–Anh, Paris, 1948. Franklin E. Huffman's citing (1986: 120) of Murray B. Emeneau's 1947 "Homonyms and Puns in Vietnamese" is evidently erroneous, for Annamese was used according to Thompson 1965:363, *inter al.*

[6] In 214 BC, the Ch'in dynasty conquered Bách–Việt [see note 11] and the ancient Vietnamese kingdom in northern Vietnam known as Âu–lặc, dividing their territories into three commanderies. In 207 BC, Triệu–Đà, governer of the Nam–Hải commandery (roughly Kwangtung province), annexed Âu–lặc and declared himself emperor of the new state of Nam–Việt. When the Han conquered this state in 111 BC, it became Giao Chỉ province of China. In 544 AD, Lý Bôn took the dynastic name, Nam–Việt–Đế 'The Nam Viet Emperor', but called his state Vạn Xuân. Circa 968 AD, the first emperor of the newly independent Vietnamese state of Đại–Cồ–Việt gave his son the honorary title, King of Nam–Việt. Much later, southern Vietnam became colloquially known as Nam–Việt (as opposed to Bắc Việt 'northern Vietnam'). *Cf.* N&N 1958:10f., 33, 61.

Thavưng and Rục data have been published in short lexica of around 770 words (Ferlus 1979a) and 1,600 words (Nguyễn Phú Phong et al. 1988), respectively. Otherwise, the vocabularies collected from many, but not all, of the remaining Vietic idioms are typically brief and phonologically inconsistent; for those published, see Thompson 1965, Ferlus 1974a and 1975, or Huffman 1986.

In 1974 and 1979 Ferlus presented classifications of the Vietic languages and dialects which, although tentative, are the most comprehensive statements of the branch's composition to date.

In 1991, Robert J. Parkin listed 20 languages which he had concluded are the members of the Vietic branch. He discusses internal relationships in some detail, but does not attempt to organize the languages into subgroups.

Ferlus proposes an early parallel divarication into four subbranches, Archaic, Pong–Toum, Mường–Nguồn, and Vietnamese. He has very clearly done an admirable job in piecing together this subbranching scheme from bits and pieces of lexical and phonetic coincidence. But since in most cases the available data were neither abundant nor precise enough to substantiate the proposed developments in any rigorous way, there is a certain degree of imprecision inherent to this classification.

The forced imprecision of such a tentative organization can be taken to imply two major eventualities. One is that the total number of languages is apt to change, whether by discovery of unknown idioms or realization that certain ones are dialects of a single language. This has, in fact, already happened. Parkin adds in his list four languages, Dan Lai, Ly Ha, Nha Lang, and Nguoi Rung (Vietnamese *người rừng* 'forest people'), not named by Ferlus, omits four others, Haut Annam Vietnamese, Kha Tong Luong, Mường (Uy Lo), and Phon Soung, cited by Ferlus, and subsumes 10 more under other languages.[7] But Parkin's many changes are hardly the last word on this matter. According to Nguyễn Phú Phong et al. (1988: 12), Vietnamese linguists in Vietnam consider Arem, Mã Liềng, Mày, Rục, and Sách to be dialects of a single language they call Chứt (from Rục /cít/ 'mountain'), thereby shrinking Parkin's total from 20 to 16 languages.[8]

The other eventuality is that intrabranch subgrouping relationships will be found to differ from those proposed by Ferlus, and the Chứt unity has already required combination of his 1974 subgroups 3 and 5. The analysis in section 4 will show that additional modifications are necessary.

The current taxonomic situation in Vietic is consequently a fluid one, where most of the proposed relationships are subject to change upon acquisition of new and more reliable information, especially on the minor languages (those exclusive

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[7] As defined by Maspero 1912:1, the Haut–Annam dialects are local idioms spoken from the northern part of Nghệ–An province to the southern part of Thừa–Thiên province in upper central Vietnam, which exhibit such archaic features as retention of certain undiphthonguized vowels and initial clusters.

[8] This word seems initially to be related to such Chamic forms as Western Cham *chok* /cɔːʔ/ 'mountain', for *-t became -ʔ in Chamic. But comparison with Proto–Austronesian *pu(N)cak* 'peak' and *bukid* 'hill' suggests that *chok* is a reflex of the former and Austroasiatic had a correspondent to the latter, whence *[bu]cit* > Vietic *cít* > Rục /cít/.

of Vietnamese and Mường). This fluidity has, as will be shown more clearly below, an impact on both onomastic and subgrouping decisions.

3. The Need for a New Terminology.

In its onomastic composition, Việt–Mường reflects the time span during which Vietnamese and Mường were the only acknowledged members of this language grouping. This span probably began in 1905 when an article by Jean N. Chéon on the Vân Mông dialect of Mường was published.[9] It ended in 1970 when Thomas and Robert K. Headley, Jr., included Arem, Mày–Rục, and Tay Poong under the Việt–Mường branch in their classification of Mon–Khmer on the basis of short word lists cited in Vương 1963. Without question, French specialists were aware at an earlier date that other languages belong to the branch, but from the literature available to me it is not clear when this was. In *Les Languages du Monde*, Henri Maspero (1952:581) mentions only Vietnamese and the Mường dialects while in 1966 André–Georges Haudricourt seems to consider the larger membership a fait accompli, for he identifies seven additional languages as members of the Vietnamese–Muong group (map, page 135), but draws no attention to the compositional change this implied.

The relatively tardy recognition of the branch's multilanguage composition can be attributed to several factors. Foremost among these are the general lack of interest in minor areal languages that prevailed prior to the 1960's, the longterm political conditions that have prevented and still make difficult fieldwork in the areas (northern Vietnam, eastern Laos) where the minor Vietic languages are situated, and the resultant paucity of reliable linguistic data. The attitude of the dominant ethnolinguistic group has undoubtedly also played a role. Due to the vast cultural differences between the Vietnamese and the speakers of most other Vietic languages, the former have tended to deny any kinship with the latter and to lump them together as one group, often including non–Vietic–speaking peoples, as well. Maspero (1912:5) believed Hung, Khong Kheng, and Nguồn to be Mường dialects, Vương Hoàng Tuyên regarded Arem, Mày, Rục, and Tay Poong in the same fashion, and linguists in Vietnam reportedly still use Mường as both a name for the Mường language and a cover term for all the other minor Vietic languages (Nguyễn Phú Phong et al. 1988:7f.). Parkin (1991:91) explains that Muong is actually a Thai word denoting a sort of fiefdom held by a local noble and the people obedient to such a noble, and observes that the Vietnamese apply the word indiscriminately to Mường and Thai groups. Đào Đăng Vỹ glosses Mường as 'mountain tribe of northern Vietnam' and cites Vietic, Miao–Yao, and Thai groups as examples.

As a consequence of such influences, most Vietic historical studies have been focussed only on the Mường–Vietnamese relationship. Nevertheless, the phonological and lexical reconstructions produced in those studies (Barker 1963, 1966, Barkers 1970, Hamp 1966, Thomas 1966, Thompson 1976) were labeled with the branch ancestral name, Proto–Vietnamuong or Proto–Việt–Mường. In 1975, Ferlus pointed out the ambiguity inherent to that terminological usage and recommended that reconstructions based on Vietnamese and Mường alone be labeled common or pre–Việt–Mường, while Proto–Việt–Mường should be reserved

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[9] The referenced article is "Note sur les Mường de la province de Sơntây", *BEFEO*, 5:328–68. In various publications, the author's name is given as A., M., or M.A. Chéon; I have used Franklin E. Huffman's citation, Jean N[icholas] Chéon (1986:70).

for those based on the evidence of all languages of the branch. In 1979, Laurence C. Thompson agreed that since Proto–Việt–Mường had been pre–empted for the branch ancestor, a different name probably was needed for the predecessor of Vietnamese and Mường. He proposed Proto–Mường–Vietnamese as that new name, should it indeed turn out to be a needed concept.

But that concept was not really needed, if (and so long as) Ferlus' classification accurately portrayed the branch's internal relationships. As noted above, his branch model implies a simultaneous split of the branch mother language into four proto–dialects. Since Vietnamese and Mường each represent a primary subgroup in this scheme, no separate term for the antecedent of these subgroups is necessary, Việt–Mường can serve as an adequate branch name, and reconstruction of the branch ancestor, Proto–Việt–Mường, could be based on the sole evidence of Vietnamese and Mường Khên, provided that the proper *caveats* were issued. Changes to the resultant proto–language indicated by the minor Vietic languages could be integrated into it, as evidence from the latter became available in reliable form.

As fate would have it, Ferlus' branch model does contain a serious flaw. In his premier Thavưng paper (1974b:322), Ferlus had distinguished a binary split in the branch mother language on the basis of the treatment of final spirants. In one subgroup (including Thavưng), */–h/, for example, was retained; in another (including Vietnamese and Mường), it had disappeared after allegedly conditioning the appearance of *hỏi–ngã tone. Perhaps due to oversight, the intrabranch division indicated by the different handling of those finals was not incorporated into Ferlus' 1974 or 1979 classification. In 1979, after reviewing the new information on the Vietic languages introduced by Ferlus in 1974a, 1974b and 1975, Thompson also concluded that certain shared innovations, including the treatment of final spirants, set Vietnamese and Mường off from the rest of Vietic and clearly apart from Thavưng. Although Thompson does not seem to have been completely convinced of it himself, his concept of a new name was needed after all.

One can now see that on the basis of the development of Proto–Vietic */–h/, Ferlus' proposed sub–branching, as depicted under (a) in Fig. 1, should have been modified as under (b) to accord with the bipolarity he had discovered in 1974. As will be shown in section 4, the recently available data from Rục, which has also retained /–h/, not only confirms this modification, but also necessitates additional changes as under (c).[10] How Ferlus' Pong–Toum subbranch fits into this new scenario will be discussed in section 4.

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[10] *Figure 1* does not reflect tonal developments associated with final spirants because the current Vietic tonogenesis hypothesis (Haudricourt 1954) does not satisfactorily account for certain aspects of Rục tonology, and clarification of this point is beyond this paper's scope.
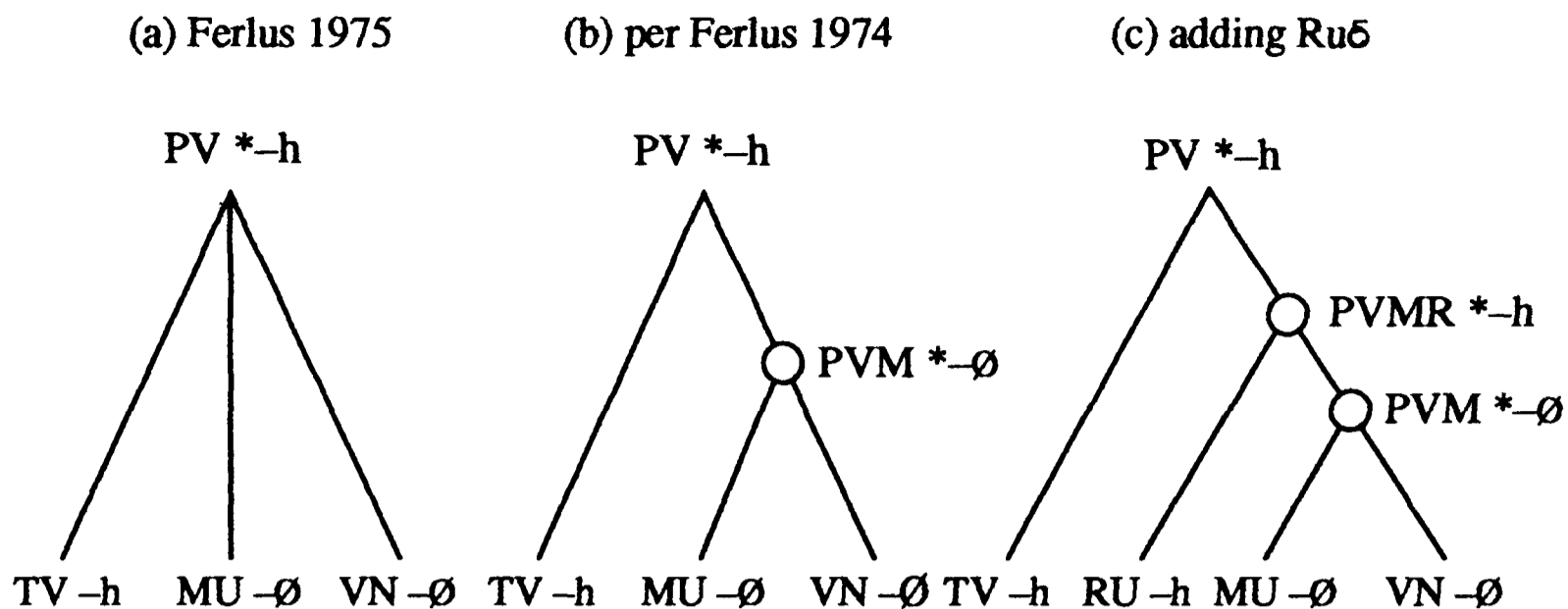
(a) Ferlus 1975   (b) per Ferlus 1974   (c) adding Ruố

PV *–h   PV *–h   PV *–h

PVMR *–h

PVM *–∅   PVM *–∅

TV –h   MU –∅   VN –∅   TV –h   MU –∅   VN –∅   TV –h   RU –h   MU –∅   VN –∅

Figure 1. Sub–branching in Vietic

Abbreviations : *MU* – Mường Khên, *PV* – Proto–Vietic, *PVM* – Proto–Việt– Mường, *PVMR* – Proto–Việt–Mường–Rục, *RU* – Rục, *TV* – Thavưng, *VN* – Vietnamese.

In 1977, Ferlus had quite graciously sent me a draft copy of his Thavưng lexicon, and in studying the interrelationships of Mường Khên, Thavưng and Vietnamese, I also came at some point to realize that a new name was needed for either the branch or its subgroup comprising Vietnamese and Mường. But rather than use Việt–Mường and Thompson's Mường–Vietnamese, an onomastic duo that might create further ambiguity and/or confusion, it seemed more appropriate to retain Việt–Mường for the ancestor of Vietnamese and Mường and devise a new name for the branch, preferably one that would also accomodate any future changes arising from the taxonomic fluidity noted above and fit this group in more homologously with its sibling Mon–Khmer branches. Since common practice in Mon–Khmer linguistics has been to name branches after a particularly important language, as in Bahnaric from Bahnar, the obvious choice was Vietic from Việt, the Vietnamese name for themselves and their language. If it is indeed true that Việt has been used in those senses since the third century BC (or even before), then its precursor may even have been the actual term for the Proto–Vietic language, its speakers, or the region they inhabited.[11]

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[11] Việt is a Sino–Vietnamese form derived from Ancient Chinese *ywet, whence also modern Mandarin yüeh 'Yueh, an area in southern China identified with the provinces of Kwantung, Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi' (Morris 1969:1428f.). The Chinese character for Yueh is in its earliest form (found in the oracle bone inscriptions dating to the 11th century BC and earlier) a pictograph of an axe (Michio 1973:15, Norman and Mei 1976:276f.). Since certain types of axes are associated with early Austroasiatic and Austronesian peoples, *ywet probably referred to an Austric population in southern China, presumably an Austroasiatic one due to the word's subsequent association with the Vietnamese. However, the name Yueh is also associated with several states in southern China in the 6th–2nd centuries BC, including Nam–Việt (Nan Yueh in Chinese) [see note 6], and it seems unlikely that all of these were Proto–Vietic. The Ch'in and Han dynasties (249 BC to 220 AD) called the "barbarians" inhabiting southern China the 'Hundred Yueh' (Norman and Mei 1976:277). Đào Đăng Vỹ identifies the Sino–Vietnamese equivalent, Bách Việt 'The Hundred Viets', as the 100 tribes descended from Lạc Long Quân, the mythical king of Xích Quỷ ([see note 1] and the forefather of the Vietnamese people. Although it is difficult to tell where fable ends and fact begins, it does appear likely that the term, Việt (and its precursors), has been associated with the Vietic–speaking peoples (and their ancestors) for at least 3,000 years.

4. Lexicostatistical Evidence for a New Subgrouping.

In preparing his tentative classification, Ferlus had to utilize much poorly recorded data and base relationship decisions on visual inspection of lexical correspondences. Other comparatists have determined through lexicostatistical analysis the genetic relationship of Vietnamese to Mường Khền (Smith 1978) and of both to other Mon–Khmer languages (Thomas and Headley 1970, Huffman 1976, Smith 1978). The chronic data shortage has prevented determination of wider relationships within Vietic via that method, but reliable data are now avilable from four languages and it can be applied to them. The analysis and its results are grantedly not quite as precise as one might like, but nevertheless they do shed considerable new light on Vietic genealogical history and subgrouping.

In the vocabulary comparison in the *Appendix*, 207–item wordlists are presented from Vietnamese and Mường Khền. The Vietnamese data are from the standard Hanoi dialèct, and were collected by the former Vietnam Branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) according to the 207–word modification of the Swadesh 200–item wordlist designed by Thomas for the Mon–Khmer languages. The Khền data, although copied directly from Thomas and Headley 1970, were collected by the SIL linguists, Milton E. and Muriel A. Barker. The Thavưng and Rục data were extracted respectively from "Lexique thavưng–français" (Ferlus 1979a) and *Lexique Vietnamien–Rục–Français* (Nguyễn Phú Phong *et al.* 1988).[12] This material was not collected pursuant to the Swadesh or SIL lists, hence the differences in number of comparative items (198 from Rục, 163 from Thavưng). Since the Rục and Thavưng entries could not be doublechecked with informants, it is likely that some error exists in that a few of the cited items may not be the most commonly used for the given gloss.

Preparatory to identification of cognates, suspected loanwords were identified and labeled by source, e.g. *C* – Chinese, *I* – Indonesian (Chamic), *N* – Nguồn, *T* – Thai, *V* – Vietnamese, so as to be excluded from the comparison.[13]

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[12] Ferlus' numeric markers for the Thavung tones, v^1, v^2, v^3, v^4, have been replaced by Vietnamese–style tone accents, v, v̀, v́, ṿ, respectively, thereby eliminating most of the notation work because v^1 accounts for some 65% of the Thavung tones.

[13] As elsewhere in South East Asia, loan identification in Vietic is problematic, with direction of movement often suspect.

a. In the *Appendix*, the aberrant tones of Vietnamese and Khền *thẳng* 'straight' suggest borrowing, but Đao Đang Vỹ does not identify the Vietnamese word as Chinese, and Proto–Tai *' *diŋ B* 'vertical, straight down' is an unlikely source. In view of Thavưng *cdaŋ* 'droit', presumably derived from *craŋ* via *c/ən/raŋ* > *cəndraŋ* > *cə}daŋ*, and Chrau *sŏn* 'straight' perhaps from *crɔŋ* > *srɔŋ* > *śɔŋ*, the Viet–Muong forms are assumed to reflect *craŋ* > *śăŋ B* > *thẳng* with unexplained irregular tone, and are therefore not loans.

b. In another example, four items have possible cognates in Daic, *cf.* Rục *ăcièng* 'elephant', Vietnamese *cọp* 'tiger', Rục *cɑk* 'rope', Vietnamese *khác* 'different' and Proto–Tai *jaaŋ C* 'elephant', *kuk* 'tiger', *jiak* 'rope', *haak* 'different'. I have not classified these items as Thai loans because the phonetic differences suggest that neither Proto–Tai nor any of its descendants was their source. Hence, it may be that (the ancestor of) Proto–Tai borrowed them from (the ancestor of) Proto–Vietic, or vice versa, that both borrowed them from a third source, or that the linkage is Austric, therefore genetic.

c. In still another case, Vietnamese *ngà* 'elephant tusk, ivory' is not identified as a Sino–Vietnamese form, but has correspondents in both Chinese and Proto–Tai. Jerry Norman and Tsu–

Incidentally, the number of loanwords identified, six in Vietnamese (four C, two T), 11 in Khên (seven V, three C, one T), seven in Rục (four V, one I, two N, and 15 in Thavưng (all T), reveals just how little influence extraneous borrowing has had on the core vocabulary of these Vietic idioms. The massive borrowing from Chinese and Thai ascribed to Vietnamese is thus put in its true context, that of cultural, political and trade influences, with loan vocabulary superimposed on a Mon–Khmer lexical base.

In most such studies, the reader is often amiss as to which items were considered congeneric by the writer. Here, identifications are revealed in a cognate–check column which permits the reader to discern precisely which pairs are considered cognate and how the total cognate counts and percentages were accumulated. The process is hardly a routine or troublefree matter.[14]

	Items listed	Total items compared	Cognates identified	Cognate percentages
Vietnamese/Mường	207/207	192	141	73.4 %
Vietnamese/Rục	207/198	185	99	53.5 %
Vietnamese/Thavưng	207/163	144	63	43.8 %
Mường/Rục	207/198	181	102	56.4 %
Mường/Thavưng	207/163	142	67	47.2 %
Rục/Thavưng	198/163	142	60	42.3 %

Figure 2. Vocabulary Comparison and Cognate Percentages.

The cognate percentages determined through the vocabulary comparison and shown in Fig. 2 confirm the above–indicated division between Thavưng and a group comprising Mường Khên, Rục, and Vietnamese. On the basis of mean percentage of 44.8%, one may tentatively conclude that Proto–Thavưng–Pakatan and Proto–Việt–Mường–Rục separated circa 85 AD, plus or minus 335 years.[15]

Lin Mei (1976:288) argue that Old Chinese *ngra 'tooth, tusk, ivory' was derived from as Austroasiatic form similar to Proto–Mnong *ngola 'tusk'.

[14] The identification of certain sets as cognate will doubtlessly seem debatable, even questionable, to some. Vietnamese bụng and Khên trộng 'abdomen', for example, are not easily relatable. I have checked them as such in the belief that the latter form is a reflex of *kəmp/l/uŋ, an infixed derivative of *kəmpuŋ, whence the former. In absence of a formal Proto–Vietic reconstruction, such supportive forms as Sora kəmpuŋ 'belly' and Katu palung 'stomach' make it probable that the bụng / trộng pair is cognate, although a chance does exist that it is not. Conversely, Rục kdəl and Thavưng kha?al 'abdomen' have been rejected as cognate, although a chance exists that they are reflexes of *kar?əl, whence *kər?al > kha?al and *kənr?əl (or *kənʔrəl > *kə'dəl > kdəl (as well as Vietnamese nãy 'belly'). In this case, Chrau candul 'abdomen' is cognate to the Rục word, Jeh klăl ĕk 'buttock' possibly to the Thavưng form, but the missing link that would tie all of these together and confirm the Rục / Thavưng pair's cognacy remains to be found.

[15] The time depths and ranges of error were computed by the formula given in Gudschinsky 1956:200ff. The error ranges are calculated at the 9/10 confidence level, meaning that there is a 90% chance (probability) that the actual date of separation of Thavưng–Pakatan and Viet–Mường–Chứt, for example, occurred between 250 BC and 420 AD.

The relevant percentages (42.3–47.2%) are considerably higher than those determined by Smith 1978 to exist between certain Mon–Khmer languages and Vietnamese (18–33%) and Mường Khền (22–35%), and confirm the inclusion of Thavựng in the Vietic branch.

The percentages also reveal a clean break between Rục and a Vietnamese/ Mường subgrouping. Based on a mean of 54.9%, one may tentatively conclude that Proto–Việt–Mường–Rục split into Pre–Rục and Proto–Việt–Mường around 570 AD, plus or minus 250 years. Proto–Chứt should probably replace Pre–Rục.

And finally, Proto–Việt–Mường split up into Proto–Vietnamese and Proto–Mường–Nguồn circa 1255 AD ±165 years. This dating is about 140 years more recent than the one computable on the basis of the 69% cognate relationship ascertained by Smith.[16]

This analysis indicates that Ferlus' 1979 classification must be modified by combining his Eastern Archaic subgroup and Mường–Nguồn and Vietnamese subbranches and regrouping them as indicated under Fig. 1 (c). This finding that the *eastern* archaic dialects are more closely related to Việt–Mường than to the *western* archaic subgroup is surprising, but it emphasizes the tentative nature of the previous classification. Ferlus called those idioms "archaic" largely due to their retention of disyllabic words, but as he and Thompson have already demonstrated, it is quite clear that the Việt–Mường languages were also disyllabic to some degree in the not too remote past.

The relative position of Ferlus' Pong–Toum subbranch remains to be determined. Haudricourt (1966:131–4) cites 100 words from a language captioned "Toum or Phong", which were collected by an unknown person at an unknown date in central Laos, but final spirants were not recorded in this data and only 47 of the glossses occur on the vocabulary list used in the *Appendix*. Comparison of these 47 items indicates that Rục and Toum are lexically closest (65%) and that as a group, they are closer to Thavựng (54%) than Việt–Mường is (44%), but never-theless closer to Việt–Mường (57%) than they are to Thavựng. Rục is also closer to Việt–Mường (61%) than Toum (53%).

This comparison suggests that Vietic may be divisible into two subbranches, Thavựng–Pakatan and Chứt–Pong–Toum–Việt–Mường, with the latter subdivisible into Chứt–Pong–Toum and Việt–Mường. But it is equally possible that Toum simply needs to be reassigned to the Chứt subgroup. Consequently, I have chosen to leave the Pong–Toum grouping intact as a separate subbranch. which may very well be inaccurate, but this "Toum " comparison is just too imprecise to support any firmer proposal at this time.

The above cited separation dates suggest some plausible connections between Vietic linguistic developments and certain events in Vietnamese history.[17] Unexpectedly ancient, the Thavựng split–off could have occurred as early as the

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[16] The cited separation date and range must be viewed with caution. Mường Khền is impressionistically more like Vietnamese than some of the other Mường dialects; hence additional Vietnamese loanwords may be concealed in the Khền data, which would distort the time–of–separation computation and push their separation date forward in time.
[17] In the histories of Vietnam available to me, one finds no events explicitly identifiable with such linguistic developments.

Ch'in conquest in 214 BC (or the Han conquest in 111 BC, see note 6). Conceivably, the ancestors of Thavưng fled to Laos to escape the Chinese subjugation, but it is equally possible that they belonged to a Vietic population already in Laos, which Chinese incursions cut off from the Vietic populace in northern Vietnam. Ferlus (1979b:8ff.) argues, in fact, that the Proto–Viets were located on the upper–middle Mekong River before entering Vietnam. The much later division in Việt–Mường–Chứt may have occurred when the ancestors of the Rục sought refuge in the Annamite Cordillera in the aftermath of the Lý Bôn rebellion in 541–4 AD Ferlus (1979b:3) has suggested that the splitup of Việt–Mường was a consequence of the end of the Chinese occupation and the emergence of an independent Vietnamese state circa 968 AD While those events probably were a catalyst for it, the analysis here indicates that the actual separation did not occur until some 200 years later.

5. Conclusion.

Due to an accident of history, Việt–Mường, *the current and last in a succession* of names for the predominant Mon–Khmer branch in Vietnam, is a less than perfect descriptive for this multi–language grouping. *The lexico–statistical and other evidence presented above confirms that impression and supports the writer's* contention that greater onomastic and taxonomic clarity (and perhaps historical accuracy) will be obtained by renaming the branch Vietic and reserving Viet–Mường for its most important subgroup.

That evidence also reveals that the internal relationships of the Vietic branch are more complex than previously thought and still subject to future changes. In fact, it suggests that an entirely new classification would not be inappropriate. As a supplement to his 1979 classification, Ferlus presents a map showing the geographic distribution of the Vietic languages in the northern Vietnam region. Vietnamese, Mường, Nguồn, and the Chứt dialects all lie to the east of the Annamite Cordillera in Vietnam, the western archaic languages (Thavưng, etc.) to the west of it in east–central Laos, and the Pong–Toum sub–branch is situated astride the Laos/Vietnam border about halfway between Mường and the western archaic subgroup. To avoid further confusion and accomodate any new name or subgrouping changes, it may be useful to adopt a new Vietic branch model based on the geographic distribution.

1. West Vietic.
    1.1.   Thavưng (Kha Tha Vưng).
    1.2.   Kha To(o)ng Luông, Phon Soung (Phôn Xúng).
    1.3.   Kha Bô, Kha Mường Ben (Bên), Kha Nặm Ốm, Pakatan.
    1.4.   Harème, Kha Phọng.

2. Central Vietic.
    2.1.   Đan Lai, Katiam Pong Houk, Ly Hà, Tà P(o)ọng.
    2.2.   Hung, Không Khêng
    2.3.   Toum (Tày Túm, Ktum).
    2.4.   Cọi, Cuôi, Tày Chăm, Tày Pụm.

3. East Vietic.
  3.1.   Chứt.
           3.1.1. Arem, Mã Liềng, Mày, Rục, Sách.
           3.1.2. Kha Mụ Già
  3.2.   Viet–Muong.
           3.2.1. Mường–Nguồn.
                     3.2.1.1.   Mường dialects.
                     3.2.1.2.   Nguồn.
           3.2.2. Vietnamese.
                     3.2.2.1.   Centrolineal dialects (Hanoi, Huế,
                                    Saigon, etc.)
                     3.2.2.2.   Archaic dialects (Haut Annam).

  Alternate names and variant spellings are given in parentheses; see Ferlus 1974a:70f., 1979b:2f., and Parkin 1991 for a more complete listing of such variations. Kha is a general pejorative Lao term for highland groups. Thavưng has been separated from 1.2 on the basis of a brief lexical comparison with Kha Tong Luông (26 cognates / 44 comparisons = 55%), which indicates separate languages are involved. Hung and Không Khêng are combined under 2.2 as dialects of one language per Haudricourt 1966:135. The new Central Vietic idioms added by Ferlus have been placed in a new subgroup, 2.4, due to lack of basis for classifying them with other subgroups. Two new idioms found in Nghệ–An Province, Đan Lai and Ly Hà, are to be grouped with Pong according to Phạm Đức Dương (cf. Ferlus and Nguyễn Phú Phong 1976–77:8). Mường Uy Lo is omitted because the lexical data in Maspero 1912 suggest that it is only a very divergent dialect of Mường. Parkin's Nha Lang and Người Rừng are also omitted due to lack of basis for grouping them with a specific subgroup. The total number of possible languages and dialects remains at 30, with centrolineal Vietnamese counted as single unit.

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
father	1cha	2pồ	2bọ	3ʔɔng
husband	1chồng	2ỗng	3mǎkúñ	1pcỗng
man	1đàn ông	1ồng tửa	—	—
mother	1mẹ	1mê	1meɛ̣	1mɛ̣ə
person	1người	2mọl	1ngày	kòn [T]
wife	1vợ	bọ [V]	2mǎki̓	2pkɛ̀ə
woman	1đàn bà	2mụng già	—	—
sibling [younger]	1em	2ún	3cɛ̣ɛ̀	4sáam
I	1tôi	tôi [V]	2ho	3kan
we (incl.)	1chúng ta	2tản ha	3mǐng	—
bird	1chim	1chim	1ìcim	1ciim
buffalo	1trâu	1tru	1klu	khuay [T]
chicken	1gà	1ca	1rɛ̀ka	1kaa
deer	1nai	1dai	1kdii	1kdii
dog	1chó	1chó	1acɔ̂	1cɔ́ɔ
duck	1vịt	1wịt	1vịt	2ʔatà
egg	1trứng	1trống	2tǝlúl	—
elephant	1voi	1woi	2ǎciềng	3ʔoong
feather	1lông chim	1lông	2ǔsúk rɛ̀ka	—
fish	1cá	1cá	1ǎkǎ	1káa
fly	1ruồi	1ruồi	1mǔrɔy	2mɔyh
louse	1chí	1chí	1cí	2kɛ̀ə
mosquito	1muỗi	1mọi	2kép	3thavòong

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
abdomen	1bụng	1trỗng	2kdɛl	3khaʔal
blood	1máu	1máu	2ǎsǎm	1tmůu
bone	1xương	1xương	1sǎng	2kkook
calf	1bắp chân	2trái chân	3pǎ̃ụa	4manêel
ear	1tai	1thai	1say	1saay
eye	1mắt	1mắt	1meʔǎt	1mat
fat	1mỡ	1mợ	2klùng	—
flesh	1thịt	nhúc [C]	sịt [V]	2mɛ́ɛng
foot	1bàn chân	1chân	1kǎdǎng ciñ	1cìing
hair	1tóc	1thác	1ǔsúk	1sɔ̀k
hand	1tay	1thay	1si	1sii
head	đầu [C]	1trốc	1kǔluòk	1ʔɔɔk
heart	1tim	tim [V]	2tong	1fìiim
intestines	1ruột	1rọch	13uạc	1hɔ̀ɔc
liver	gan [C]	1lòm	1lˀɔ̀m	1lɔ̀ɔm
mouth	1miệng	2mồm	3káng	4snuuy
neck	1cổ	2kel	2tɛ̌kɛ́	3nèet
nose	1mũi	1mui	1mulʃ	1muyh
palm	1bàn tay	1dáng thay	1kǎdǎng si	1kpaang
shoulder	1vai	bai [V]	2kǎlang	3ʔapìing
skin	1da	1ta	2kǎrɔ̂t	2khaloot
thigh	1bắp đùi	2lu	2pǔlu	2malùu
tongue	1lưỡi	1lại	1lˀarh	1layh
tooth	1răng	1thǎng	1kǎsǎng	1ksang
child	1con	1con	1kɔn	—

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
ashes	1tro	1trạt lọ	2tăpeh	3buuñ
burning	1cháy	1chảl	2kŭcɔ̆h	1cal
fire	1lửa	2củi	2kŭř (h)	2kuyh
firewood	1củi	1củi	1kurh	1kuyh
smoke	1khói	1khói	1kằhɔ̆y	1kàhɔy
cloud	1mây	1mâl	1mə̀l	meek [T]
day	1ngày	1ngày	2pàkᵒɔh	—
dust	1bụi	1pul	2kằʔyìh	—
soil	1đất	1tất	2bə̀n	3ʔataak
gold	1vàng	1wàng	1vàng	ʔakɔm [T]
mist	1sương mù	2hoi	1mù	—
moon	1trăng	1trăng	pūleʔan [I]	1palɓong
mountain	1núi	2tồl	3cə̆t	4ʔalɔɔng
night	1đêm	1têm	2lə̀m	3ʔamah
rain	1mưa	1mưa	1kŭmᴧa	2malɓoy
river	1sông	1không	2yɨng	—
salt	1muối	1bối	1bɔ̆y	1bɔy
sand	1cát	1cách	1tə̆kɐ̆c	2theh
sky	1trời	1trời	1pley	—
star	1sao	1khao	2kŭmiñ	3ʔakɔɔl
stone	1đá	2khụ	1latá	3kih

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
pig	1heo	2củi	2kul	2kùul
rat	1chuột	2rề	3kồné	4ʔiik
snake	1rắn	1thành	1pềsiñ	2luk
tail	1đuôi	1tuổi	1tuờy	1tɓoy
tiger	1cọp	2khál	2kuhál	2kahaal
tusk	1ngà	1nga woi	2pằlyà ăciềng	1ngaa
wing	1cánh	1kénh	1kéng	mày-phàay[T]
worm	1trùn	1khun	2tằlằñ	3luk
banana	chuối [T]	chuối [T]	1katày	kuay [T]
bark	1vỏ cây	2ta	3kằduh kᵊᴧy	1khabɔh
betel	1trầu	1trù	1plù	1palùu
flower	hoa [C]	wa [C]	1pɨal	2poong
forest	1rừng	1rằng	2brú	1khalɛng
fruit	1trái	1trái	1pềli	1phalɓe
grass	1cỏ	1cỏ	1kɔh	1kɔh
leaf	1lá	1lá	1ũlá	1sláa
rattan	1mây	1mây	2tằlằy	—
rice cooked	1cơm	1cơm	1kem	2caaw
rice dehusked	1gạo	1cáo	1řằkó	1ʔak6o
root	1rẽ	1rạch	1lierlh	1heh
seed	1hột	1hột	2kằyáng	3khalɔɔng
tree	1cây	1cál	kᵊᴧy [V]	2thàng
wax	1sáp	1kháp	1kráp	2pkɛɛ

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
eight	1tám	1thám	tʰám [N]	1sáam
nine	1chín	1chín	1cín	1ciin
ten	1mười	1mười	mìəy [V]	sip [T]
hundred	1trăm	1trăm	1klăm	lɔɔy [T]
alive	1sống	1khống	1klúng	—
bad	1xấu	2chăng-đênh	3fùm	4ʔìh
big	1lớn	2to	3məàm	2flum
black	1đen	2giàm	1tenten	4ngcɔl
cold	1lạnh	2chá	3lubât	2taang
different	1khác	1khác	1kʰák	—
dirty	1dơ	2bấn	3fìəp	1phalii
drunk	1say	1khay	1pri	—
dry	1khô	1tháo	1kʰo	4púu
dull	1cùn	2lượt	3pəsút	2sngàay
far	1xa	1xa	2cằngáy	dii [T]
good	1tốt	2dênh	tʰót [N]	—
heavy	1nặng	1nặng	1nǎng	—
hot	1nóng	2khốt	3tɨl	1phadɔng
long	1dài	giải [V]	1ʔyal	2joon
many	1nhiều	2từ	1fìw	3doo
near	1gần	1khánh	1ckìn	—
new	1mới	mới [V]	1bəy	—

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
thunder	1sấm	1khấm	1krìm	—
water	1nước	1đác	1dák	1daak
waterfall	1ghềnh	1hềnh đác	—	—
wind	1gió	1xó	1kǎyɔ	1kjuu
year	1năm	1năm	1năm	1cɔm
arrow	1tên	2lal	3mulʃ cǎrah	4kam
cook	1nấu	1nổ	2tʌt	—
crossbow	1ná	1ná	1ná	1snaa
drum	1trống	1trống	1klóng	—
house	1nhà	1nhà	1fia	2ʔuh
mortar	1cối	1cổl	1tǎkól	1kóol
name	1tên	1thên	ten [V]	—
pestle	1chày	1khày	1nᵈri	1ʔahəə
road	1đường	2khá	1tiàng ti	2khaláa
rope	1dây	1dây	2cak	1ʔatal
one	1một	1mộch	1moᵗc	1muut
two	1hai	1hal	1hal	1haal
three	1ba	1pa	1pa	1paa
four	1bốn	1pốn	1pón	1póon
five	1năm	1đăm	1dăm	1dam
six	1sáu	1kháu	1ʃáw	1phaluʔ
seven	1bảy	1pảy	1bảy	1pih

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
count	1đếm	1tếm	1tếm	—
cut	1cắt	1cách	1kắc	tat [T]
die	1chết	1chết	1kŭcít	1ceet
dig	1đào	1tào	2tŭɲ	3kaay
drink	1uống	1óng	2ɲu	2ɲuu
drown	1đắm	1tắm	—	—
eat	1ăn	1ăn	1ăn	1ʔan
enter	1vào	1pao	2lɔ̆ɔn	2lɔɔn
fall (down)	1rớt	2trẻ	3kŭtoh	4thalɗoy
fall (over)	1đổ	2lờ	3tlɔ rĕngah	1ktoh
fear	1sợ	2dưới	3ukʉn	—
float	1nổi	1nổi [V]	1dɔl	—
flow	1chảy	1chảy	—	—
fly	1bay	1pal	1pɛl	2hul
give	1cho	1cho	—	—
hear	1nghe	2măng	2cămăng	2hapàng
hit	1đánh	1tánh	1tắɲ	2pɔh
know	1biết	1mắt	2hi	huʔ [T]
laugh	1cười	1cười	2ʔăl	3khamayh
launder	1giặt	1chất	2poɓ	—
play	1chơi	2giồng	3ăscng	4kdaan
pull	1kéo	1kéo	1kéw	2ʔin
push	1đẩy	1tủi	1tʌl	2ʔatuk
return	1về	1wềl	—	1lɔp vɔɔl
scratch	1gãi	1cải	2kakát	1ʔakayh

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
aged	1già	1khà	2kŭmiɐk	thaw [T]
red	1đỏ	1tỏ	1tɔ	1tɔh
rotten	1thối	1hối	2pʉʔɔk	3khɔm
same	1giống	2nhơ	2ɲi	—
sharp	1sắc	1khắc	2lĭk	—
short	1thấp	2pắn	2pằnpắn	3ʔen
sick	1đau	2ốm	3sɔ́t	1tuu
small	1nhỏ	2con	3dɛdɛ̆	4ʔiit
straight	1thẳng	1thẳng	2tĕngal	1cdang
tall	cao [C]	1giàl	1ʔyol	—
thick	1dày	1tày	1kutiɐy	2kbuu
thin	mỏng [T]	1hel	2ksăng	2psang
wet	1ướt	2thul	3ăʔyɔ̆k	—
white	1trắng	1trắng	2tĕkal	3lɔɔk
here	1đây	2ni	2nguy ni	—
leftside	1trái	2chiêu	1klấy	3vɛɛl
rightside	1phải	2tàm	2rɛ̆ɐm	3tàm
what	1gì	1chi	2căme	3ʔahɐɐ
with	1với	1pợi	—	nàm [T]
bite	1cắn	1cánh	2kɔ̆ɔm	3tuh
blow	1thổi	1hủl	1thul	1thuul
buy	1mua	1mua	1muʌ	2caak
come	1đến	1tếnh	—	2laay

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
see	1xem	2dü	3ngɔ̌	4nàh
sew	1may	1bal	1bǎl	—
sing	1hát	1hát	1hát	—
sit	1ngồi	1ngòi	1ngừy	2cung lòong
sleep	1ngủ	2tảy	3ɲ³k̚p	4ɲam
smell	1ngửi	2hit	2hit	3hɔ̀ong
speak	1nói	2khế	3còl	4vàw
spit	1khac nhổ	1chü	1kũcüh	2kha?aak
split	1chẻ	1chẻ	2pɨah	3pìh
squeeze	1bóp	2nùnh	1pɔ́p	—
stab	1dâm	1tâm	2cᵊǎt	—
suck	1bú	1ủ	1pú	—
swim	1lội	2uồng	1lọy	—
take	1lấy	1lê	1lì	2núm
think	1nghĩ	2ngắm	1ngɨ	—
throw	1ném	2chéo	3cǎp	4vit
tie	1buộc	1puộc	2?yǎk	1pòok
vomit	1mửa	1bả	1bǎh	2?akɔol
walk	1di	1ti chân	1tì	1ừ
want	1muốn	háo [C]	1buón	yaak [T]
wash	1rửa	1thửa	23ᵊaw	làang [T]
weep	1khóc	2nham	2yam	3hahìim
wipe	1lau	1lau	2cừy	3ʔit

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