

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

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## I. From Annam to Vietic: A Brief Onomastic History.

Since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> At the time, the only known member of the Annam group within Mon-Khmer was called Annamese or Annamite.<sup>4</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> In his 1651 *Dictionarium Annamiticum, 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> As Vietnamese gained currency after North and South Vietnam became independent 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-Muong 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, Thavung [t'əviŋ], 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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<sup>5</sup> The earliest usage of the term in a linguistic publication seems to be Lê Văn Lý's *Le Parler Vietnamien*, Imprimerie-Éditions 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.*

<sup>6</sup> 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, governor 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-Đề '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–Nguôn, 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 Liêng, 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.<sup>8</sup>

The other eventuality is that intrabranched 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

<sup>7</sup> 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 undiphthongized vowels and initial clusters.

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 Langues 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 Nguôn 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

<sup>9</sup> The referenced article is "Note sur les Mường de la province de Sontây", *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 Thavung 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 Thavung), \*/–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 intrabranched 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 Thavung. 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).<sup>10</sup> How Ferlus' Pong–Toum subbranch fits into this new scenario will be discussed in section 4.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

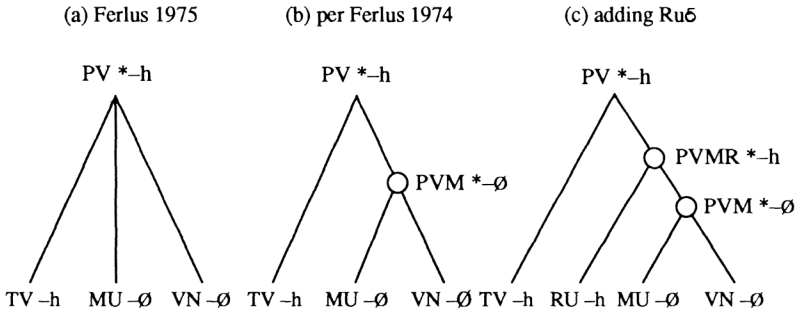


Figure 1. Sub-branching in Vietic

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

In 1977, Ferlus had quite graciously sent me a draft copy of his Thavung lexicon, and in studying the interrelationships of Mường Khên, Thavung 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 accommodate 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.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Khên (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 available 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 Khên. The Vietnamese data are from the standard Hanoi dialect, 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 Khên data, although copied directly from Thomas and Headley 1970, were collected by the SIL linguists, Milton E. and Muriel A. Barker. The Thavung and Rục data were extracted respectively from “Lexique thavung–français” (Ferlus 1979a) and *Lexique Vietnamien–Rục–Français* (Nguyễn Phú Phong *et al.* 1988).<sup>12</sup> 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 Thavung). Since the Rục and Thavung 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* – Nguôn, *T* – Thai, *V* – Vietnamese, so as to be excluded from the comparison.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ferlus’ numeric markers for the Thavung tones,  $v^1$ ,  $v^2$ ,  $v^3$ ,  $v^4$ , have been replaced by Vietnamese–style tone accents,  $v$ ,  $\grave{v}$ ,  $\acute{v}$ ,  $\check{v}$ , respectively, thereby eliminating most of the notation work because  $v^1$  accounts for some 65% of the Thavung tones.

<sup>13</sup> 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 Khên *thẳng* ‘straight’ suggest borrowing, but Đào Đăng Vỹ does not identify the Vietnamese word as Chinese, and Proto–Tai \**diŋ* B ‘vertical, straight down’ is an unlikely source. In view of Thavung *cdaj* ‘droit’, presumably derived from \**craŋ* via \**c/ɔn/raŋ* > \**cəndraŋ* > \**cə]daŋ*, and Chau sôn ‘straight’ perhaps from \**crɔŋ* > \**srɔŋ* > \**ʂɔŋ*, the Viet–Muong forms are assumed to reflect \**craŋ* > \**ʂaj* B > *thẳng* with unexplained irregular tone, and are therefore not loans.

b. In another example, four items have possible cognates in Daic, cf. Rục *ăciəng* ‘elephant’, Vietnamese *cọp* ‘tiger’, Rục *çak* ‘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 Thavung (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.<sup>14</sup>

	<i>Items listed</i>	<i>Total items compared</i>	<i>Cognates identified</i>	<i>Cognate percentages</i>
Vietnamese/Mường	207/207	192	141	73.4 %
Vietnamese/Rục	207/198	185	99	53.5 %
Vietnamese/Thavung	207/163	144	63	43.8 %
Mường/Rục	207/198	181	102	56.4 %
Mường/Thavung	207/163	142	67	47.2 %
Rục/Thavung	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 Thavung and a group comprising Mường Khên, Rục, and Vietnamese. On the basis of mean percentage of 44.8%, one may tentatively conclude that Proto–Thavung–Pakatan and Proto–Việt–Mường–Rục separated circa 85 AD, plus or minus 335 years.<sup>15</sup>

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

<sup>14</sup> The identification of certain sets as cognate will doubtlessly seem debatable, even questionable, to some. Vietnamese *bụng* and Khên *trông* ‘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/uj*, 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* / *trông* pair is cognate, although a chance does exist that it is not. Conversely, Rục *kdəl* and Thavung *khaʔal* ‘abdomen’ have been rejected as cognate, although a chance exists that they are reflexes of *\*karʔəl*, whence *\*karʔal* > *khaʔal* and *\*kənʔəl* (or *\*kənʔəl* > *\*kəʔ dəl* > *kdəl* (as well as Vietnamese *nây* ‘belly’). In this case, Chrau *candul* ‘abdomen’ is cognate to the Rục word, *Jeh kläl êk* ‘buttock’ possibly to the Thavung form, but the missing link that would tie all of these together and confirm the Rục / Thavung pair’s cognacy remains to be found.

<sup>15</sup> 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 Thavung–Pakatan and Viet–Mường–Chút, 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 Khên (22–35%), and confirm the inclusion of Thavung 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  $\pm$ 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.<sup>16</sup>

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 glosses 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 Thavung (54%) than Việt–Mường is (44%), but nevertheless closer to Việt–Mường (57%) than they are to Thavung. Rục is also closer to Việt–Mường (61%) than Toum (53%).

This comparison suggests that Vietic may be divisible into two subbranches, Thavung–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.<sup>17</sup> Unexpectedly ancient, the Thavung split-off could have occurred as early as the

<sup>16</sup> The cited separation date and range must be viewed with caution. Mường Khên is impressionistically more like Vietnamese than some of the other Mường dialects; hence additional Vietnamese loanwords may be concealed in the Khên data, which would distort the time-of-separation computation and push their separation date forward in time.

<sup>17</sup> 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 Thavung 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 Việt-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 (Thavung, 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. Thavung (Kha Tha Vung).
- 1.2. Kha To(o)ng Luông, Phon Soung (Phôn Xúng).
- 1.3. Kha Bô, Kha Mường Ben (Bên), Kha Nặm Óm, Pakatan.
- 1.4. Harème, Kha Phọng.

### 2. Central Vietic.

- 2.1. Đan Lai, Katiam Pong Houk, Ly Hà, Tà P(o)ng.
- 2.2. Hung, Không Khêng
- 2.3. Toum (Tây Túm, Ktum).
- 2.4. Cọi, Cuôi, Tây Châm, Tây Pùm.

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. Thavung 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	Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
<i>abdomen</i>	1bung	1trông	2kdəl	3khaʔal	<i>father</i>	1cha	2pô	2bɔ	3ʔong
<i>blood</i>	1máu	1máu	2sám	1tmúu	<i>husband</i>	1chông	2ông	3mákúñ	1pông
<i>bone</i>	1xương	1xương	1sàng	2tkook	<i>man</i>	1dàn ông	1ông túa	—	—
<i>calf</i>	1bắp chân	2trái chân	3páɣua	4manèel	<i>mother</i>	1mẹ	1mẹ	1mɛ	1mɛ
<i>ear</i>	1tai	1thai	1say	1saay	<i>person</i>	1người	2mọi	1ngày	kôn [T]
<i>eye</i>	1mắt	1mắt	1m <sup>o</sup> át	1mat	<i>wife</i>	1vợ	bợ [V]	2măki	2pkəə
<i>fat</i>	1mỡ	1mỡ	2klùng	—	<i>woman</i>	1dàn bà	2mụng gia	—	—
<i>flesh</i>	1thịt	nhuc [C]	sít [V]	2mééng	<i>sibling</i>	1em	2ún	3c <sup>è</sup>	4sáam
<i>foot</i>	1bàn chân	1chân	1kádáng cín	1cìng	<i>younger</i>	—	—	—	—
<i>hair</i>	1tóc	1thác	1súk	1sok	<i>I</i>	1tôi	tôi [V]	2ho	3kan
<i>hand</i>	1tay	1thay	1si	1sii	<i>we (incl.)</i>	1chúng ta	2tân ha	3mìng	—
<i>head</i>	đầu [C]	1tróc	1kúluòk	1ʔook	<i>bird</i>	1chim	1chim	1cìim	1cìim
<i>heart</i>	1tim	1tim [V]	2tong	1tiim	<i>buffalo</i>	1trâu	1tru	1klu	khuay [T]
<i>intestines</i>	1ruột	1roch	1suac	1hɔc	<i>chicken</i>	1gà	1ca	1rəka	1kaa
<i>liver</i>	gan [C]	1lòm	1lòm	1lòm	<i>deer</i>	1nai	1dai	1kdi	1kdi
<i>mouth</i>	1miệng	2mòm	3káng	4snuy	<i>dog</i>	1chó	1chó	1acɔ	1cɔ
<i>nose</i>	1cổ	2kèk	2təké	3nəət	<i>duck</i>	1vịt	1vịt	1vít	2ʔatà
<i>nose</i>	1mũi	1mũi	1mulj	1muyh	<i>egg</i>	1trứng	1trống	2təlul	—
<i>palm</i>	1bàn tay	1dáng thay	1kádáng si	1kpaang	<i>elephant</i>	1voi	1voi	2áciēng	3ʔoong
<i>shoulder</i>	1vai	bai [V]	2kálang	3ʔapìng	<i>feather</i>	1lông chim	1lông	2úsúk rəka	—
<i>skin</i>	1da	1ta	2kərət	2khaloot	<i>fish</i>	1cá	1cá	1kka	1kaa
<i>thigh</i>	1bắp đùi	2lu	2pulu	2maluu	<i>fly</i>	1ruồi	1ruồi	1mürɔy	2mɔyh
<i>tongue</i>	1lưỡi	1lại	1l <sup>ə</sup> arh	1layh	<i>louse</i>	1chí	1chí	1cì	2kəə
<i>tooth</i>	1răng	1thàng	1kàsáng	1ksang	<i>mosquito</i>	1muỗi	1mọi	2kəp	3thavòong
<i>child</i>	1con	1con	1kon	—					

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavung	Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavung
<i>pig</i>	1heo	2cui	2kul	2kuul	<i>ashes</i>	1tro	1trat lo	2tápeh	3buuf
<i>rat</i>	1chuột	2rè	3kôné	4frik	<i>burning</i>	1cháy	1chál	2küc <sup>o</sup> h	1cal
<i>snake</i>	1rắn	1thánh	1pổsín	2luk	<i>fire</i>	1lửa	2cui	2kuř (h)	2kuyh
<i>tail</i>	1đuôi	1tuoi	1tuoy	1tđoy	<i>firewood</i>	1củ	1củ	1kurh	1kuyh
<i>tiger</i>	1cop	2hál	2kuhál	2kahaal	<i>smoke</i>	1khói	1khói	1káhóy	1kahooy
<i>tusk</i>	1ngà	1nga woi	2páyà ácieng	1ngaa	<i>cloud</i>	1mây	1mál	1mál	meeK [T]
<i>wing</i>	1cánh	1kánh	1keng	mày-pháy[T]	<i>day</i>	1ngày	1ngày	2pàk <sup>o</sup> h	—
<i>worm</i>	1trùn	1khun	2tắlắn	3luk	<i>dust</i>	1bụi	1pul	2kắlyih	—
<i>banana</i>	chuối [T]	chuối [T]	1katáy	kuay [T]	<i>soil</i>	1đát	1tát	2bón	2akom [T]
<i>bark</i>	1vỏ cây	2ta	3kádut k <sup>o</sup> ay	1khaboh	<i>gold</i>	1vàng	1wàng	1wàng	—
<i>betel</i>	1trầu	1trù	1plù	1palhu	<i>mist</i>	1sương mù	2hoi	1mù	—
<i>flower</i>	hoa [C]	wa [C]	1pial	2poong	<i>moon</i>	1trăng	1tràng	pủ <sup>o</sup> an [I]	1palbong
<i>forest</i>	1rừng	1ràng	2brú	1khaləng	<i>mountain</i>	1núi	2tòi	3cát	4faləng
<i>fruit</i>	1trái	1trái	1pắli	1phaləə	<i>night</i>	1đêm	1tém	2lìm	3famah
<i>grass</i>	1cỏ	1cỏ	1koh	1koh	<i>rain</i>	1mưa	1mưa	1kùm <sup>a</sup> a	2malbøy
<i>leaf</i>	1lá	1lá	1lúá	1sláa	<i>river</i>	1sông	1khong	2yung	—
<i>rattan</i>	1mây	1mây	2tắlắy	—	<i>salt</i>	1muối	1bói	1bóy	1booy
<i>rice cooked</i>	1com	1com	1kəm	2caaw	<i>sand</i>	1cát	1cách	1tắkác	2theh
<i>rice dehusked</i>	1gạo	1cáo	1rắkó	1rakó	<i>sky</i>	1trời	1trời	1play	—
<i>root</i>	1rễ	1rach	1lierih	1heh	<i>star</i>	1sao	1khao	2kủmih	3fakool
<i>seed</i>	1hột	1hột	2kắyáng	3khaləng	<i>stone</i>	1đá	1đá	1latá	3kùh
<i>tree</i>	1cây	1cây	k <sup>o</sup> ay [V]	2thàng					
<i>wax</i>	1sáp	1kháp	1kráp	2pkee					

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
<i>eight</i>	1 tám	1 thám	1 tám [N]	1 sáam
<i>nine</i>	1 chín	1 chún	1 cín	1 cín
<i>ten</i>	1 mười	1 mười	miày [V]	sip [T]
<i>hundred</i>	1 trăm	1 trám	1 klăm	looy [T]
<i>alive</i>	1 sống	1 khống	1 klúng	—
<i>bad</i>	1 xấu	2 chǎng-dénh	3 fām	—
<i>big</i>	1 lớn	2 to	3 m <sup>2</sup> am	4 ʔih
<i>black</i>	1 đen	2 giām	1 ten ten	2 thum
<i>cold</i>	1 lạnh	2 chá	3 lư bát	4 ngool
<i>different</i>	1 khác	1 khác	1 k <sup>h</sup> ák	2 taang
<i>dirty</i>	1 dơ	2 bán	3 nóp	—
<i>drunk</i>	1 say	1 khay	1 pñi	1 phalii
<i>dry</i>	1 khô	1 tháo	1 k <sup>h</sup> o	—
<i>dull</i>	1 cùn	2 lượ t	3 pəsút	4 púu
<i>far</i>	1 xa	1 xa	2 cǎngáy	2 ngàay
<i>good</i>	1 tốt	2 đénh	1 ʔót [N]	đii [T]
<i>heavy</i>	1 nặng	1 nặng	1 nǎng	—
<i>hot</i>	1 nóng	2 khốt	3 tǎi	1 phadong
<i>long</i>	1 dài	giài [V]	1 ʔyal	2 loon
<i>many</i>	1 nhiều	2 từ	1 m̄w	3 doo
<i>near</i>	1 gần	1 khánh	1 ckin	—
<i>new</i>	1 mới	mới [V]	1 báy	—

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
<i>thunder</i>	1 sấm	1 khấm	1 křm	—
<i>water</i>	1 nước	1 dác	1 dák	1 daak
<i>waterfall</i>	1 ghềnh	1 hèn dác	—	—
<i>wind</i>	1 gió	1 xó	1 kǎy ʔ	1 kjuu
<i>year</i>	1 năm	1 năm	1 năm	1 com
<i>arrow</i>	1 tên	2 lại	3 mul f cǎrah	4 kam
<i>cook</i>	1 nấu	1 nố	2 ʔít	—
<i>crossbow</i>	1 nỏ	1 nỏ	1 nǎ	1 snaa
<i>drum</i>	1 trống	1 trống	1 klóng	—
<i>house</i>	1 nhà	1 nhà	1 nǎ	2 ʔuh
<i>mortar</i>	1 cối	1 cối	1 tǎkól	1 kool
<i>name</i>	1 tên	1 tên	ten [V]	—
<i>pestle</i>	1 chày	1 khay	1 n <sup>h</sup> ni	1 ʔahəə
<i>road</i>	1 đường	2 khá	1 tàng ti	2 khalaá
<i>rope</i>	1 dây	1 dây	2 cǎk	1 ʔatal
<i>one</i>	1 một	1 mốtch	1 m <sup>h</sup> oic	1 muut
<i>two</i>	1 hai	1 hai	1 hai	1 haal
<i>three</i>	1 ba	1 pa	1 pa	1 paa
<i>four</i>	1 bốn	1 pón	1 pón	1 poon
<i>five</i>	1 năm	1 đăm	1 đăm	1 dam
<i>six</i>	1 sáu	1 sáu	1 ʔráw	1 phalu?
<i>seven</i>	1 bảy	1 bảy	1 pǎy	1 pih

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavung	Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavung
<i>aged</i>	1già	1khà	2kümüak	thaw [T]	<i>count</i>	1đếm	1tém	1tém	—
<i>red</i>	1đỏ	1tỏ	1tỏ	1tỏh	<i>cut</i>	1cát	1cách	1kác	tat [T]
<i>rotten</i>	1thối	1hối	2pủʔk	3khom	<i>die</i>	1chết	1chết	1kũcít	1cøet
<i>same</i>	1giống	2nhơ	2ñi	—	<i>dig</i>	1đào	1tào	2tũn	3kaay
<i>sharp</i>	1sắc	1khác	2lik	—	<i>drink</i>	1uống	1uống	2ñú	2ñúu
<i>short</i>	1thấp	2bản	2pảnpán	3ʔən	<i>drown</i>	1dắm	1dắm	—	—
<i>sick</i>	1đau	2ốm	3sốt	1uu	<i>eat</i>	1ăn	1ăn	1ăn	1ʔan
<i>small</i>	1nhỏ	2con	3dэдэ	2ñit	<i>enter</i>	1vào	1pao	2lòn	2lcon
<i>straight</i>	1thẳng	1thẳng	2təngal	1cdang	<i>fall (down)</i>	1rớt	2tré	3kũtoh	4thalbooy
<i>tall</i>	cao [C]	1gật	1ʔyol	—	<i>fall (over)</i>	1đổ	2lỏ	3ulo rəngah	1ktoh
<i>thick</i>	1dày	1tày	1kuietèy	2kbuu	<i>fear</i>	1sợ	2tuời	3ukun	—
<i>thin</i>	mỏng [T]	1hel	2ksang	2psang	<i>float</i>	1nổi	1nổi [V]	1dol	—
<i>wet</i>	1ướt	2thul	3ʔyʔk	—	<i>flow</i>	1chảy	1chảy	—	—
<i>white</i>	1trắng	1trắng	2təkal	3lɔk	<i>fly</i>	1bay	1pal	1pəl	2hul
					<i>give</i>	1cho	1cho	—	—
<i>here</i>	1đây	2ni	2nguy ni	—	<i>hear</i>	1nghe	2mang	2cámang	2hapang
<i>leftside</i>	1trái	2chiêu	1kláy	3veel	<i>hit</i>	1đánh	1tánh	1tán	2poh
<i>rightside</i>	1phải	2tâm	2tʔam	3tâm	<i>know</i>	1biết	1mát	2hi	huʔ [T]
<i>what</i>	1gì	1chi	2cámə	3ʔahəə	<i>laugh</i>	1cười	1cười	2ʔal	3khamayh
<i>with</i>	1với	1pời	—	năm [T]	<i>launder</i>	1giặt	1chát	2poo	—
					<i>play</i>	1chơi	2giông	3səng	4kdaan
<i>bite</i>	1cắn	1cánh	2kʔəm	3tuh	<i>pull</i>	1kéo	1kéo	1kəw	2ʔhñ
<i>blow</i>	1thổi	1hủi	1thul	1thuil	<i>push</i>	1đẩy	1túi	1təl	2ʔatuk
<i>buy</i>	1mua	1mua	1mua	2caak	<i>return</i>	1về	1wèl	—	1lop vool
<i>come</i>	1đến	1ténh	—	2laay	<i>scratch</i>	1gãi	1cái	2kakát	ʔakayh

Gloss	Việt	Mường	Rục	Thavưng
<i>see</i>	1xem	2đú	3ngỏ	4nàh
<i>sew</i>	1may	1bảl	1bảl	—
<i>sing</i>	1hát	1hát	1hát	—
<i>sit</i>	1ngồi	1ngồi	1ngùy	2cung lờong
<i>sleep</i>	1ngủ	2táy	3n'ap	4nam
<i>smell</i>	1ngửi	2hít	2hít	3hđong
<i>speak</i>	1nói	2khế	3cól	4váv
<i>spit</i>	1khạc nhổ	1chú	1kũcũh	2kha?aak
<i>split</i>	1ché	1ché	2pháh	3phì
<i>squeeze</i>	1bóp	2nính	1póp	—
<i>stab</i>	1đâm	1tám	2c'ắt	—
<i>suck</i>	1bú	1ú	1pú	—
<i>swim</i>	1lội	2uông	1løy	—
<i>take</i>	1lấy	1lệ	1li	2núm
<i>think</i>	1nghĩ	2ngám	1ngi	—
<i>throw</i>	1ném	2chéo	3cáp	4vit
<i>tie</i>	1buộc	1puộc	2?yáak	1pook
<i>vomit</i>	1mửa	1bá	1bảh	2?ak'ool
<i>walk</i>	1đi	1ti chân	1ti	1túi
<i>want</i>	1muốn	háo [C]	1buón	yaak [T]
<i>wash</i>	1rửa	1thửa	23'áv	làang [T]
<i>weep</i>	1khóc	2nhạm	2yạm	3hahim
<i>wipe</i>	1lau	1lau	2cùy	3?it



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