The origin of the Sek implications for Tai and Vietnamese history

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Dedication:

In a 1958 communication to the *Journal Asiatique*, having pointed out that the Sek spoken in Khammouane Province was not related to the Sách of Cadière and not related closely to Lao, but rather resembled the Tai languages spoken in Guangxi and Guangdong such as Man-Cao-Lan, Ts'un Lao, Nung-an, or Dioi, André Haudricourt remarked:

> The Sek are experts in irrigated agriculture; they could not have come from China across the mountains since there are no traces elsewhere in Laos; rather they are found near the ancient Cham frontier of the Chinese empire before the independence of Vietnam. One might ask whether it is a question of an old Chinese deportation to the frontiers of people from Guangdong carried out more than a millennium ago; and it would be worthwhile to see if in the annals the historians have spoken of them.

Unfortunately, since this issue was raised 40 years ago, no one has attempted a response. No doubt this is due to the mixing of disciplines necessary to approach the relevant information. I would therefore like to dedicate this paper to the memory and departed spirit of André-G. Haudricourt, a great multidisciplinarian, whom it was my honor to have known.

1. Introduction

First noted by Haudricourt in the 1950s, the importance of Sek[1] to comparative and historical Tai studies became known to the Tai studies community primarily through the efforts of Professor William J. Gedney in a series of papers and publications dating from 1965 through 1982, culminating in the publication of his extensive glossary and texts, a large volume of 989 pages edited by Thomas Hudak in 1993. This impressive volume is the result of intensive field studies carried out by Gedney in the northeastern Thai province of Nakhon Phanom, a location to which

[1] I have retained the original spelling of Sek, (1) because it is consistant with the romanization used in Laos, and (2) because phonetically the vowel is really /ɛ/ rather than /æ/ which is true for the Lao language as well.

many Sek speakers had been transported by the Thai military approximately between the years of 1828 and 1860. A few of the texts incorporated into the volume, and Gedney's notes taken from older Sek speakers in Ban Atsamat, refer to original locations of Sek villages, but without much geographical precision since these are oral traditions, not based upon direct experience. Because the Sek language is particularly archaic in its preservation of consonant clusters, and since the languages most closely related to Sek are spoken primarily in Southern China, the origins of the Sek people are of great historical interest to the mainland of Southeast Asia, to the protohistory of the Tais, and to the ethnohistory of Vietnam. Therefore, in this paper I would like pursue further the issue of the origins of the Sek.

The Sek language has been described variously as belonging to the Northern Branch of Tai or to an earlier (pre-Proto Tai) broader grouping. The latter was the view of Gedney, one to which I subscribe and have illustrated in a dendrogram (Figure 1) first prepared in 1991(b). Also in 1991(c), I proposed that the Mène language of Nghê An Province in Vietnam, now also spoken in Borikhamxay Province in Laos, contains a substratum of Sek-like features, evidenced in vocabulary and in the tone system, which leads us to conclude that there was a Northern Tai (or closely related) group of languages located to the south of the Red River (Hồng) delta which must have originally formed a continuum from Guangxi to Thanh Hoá.

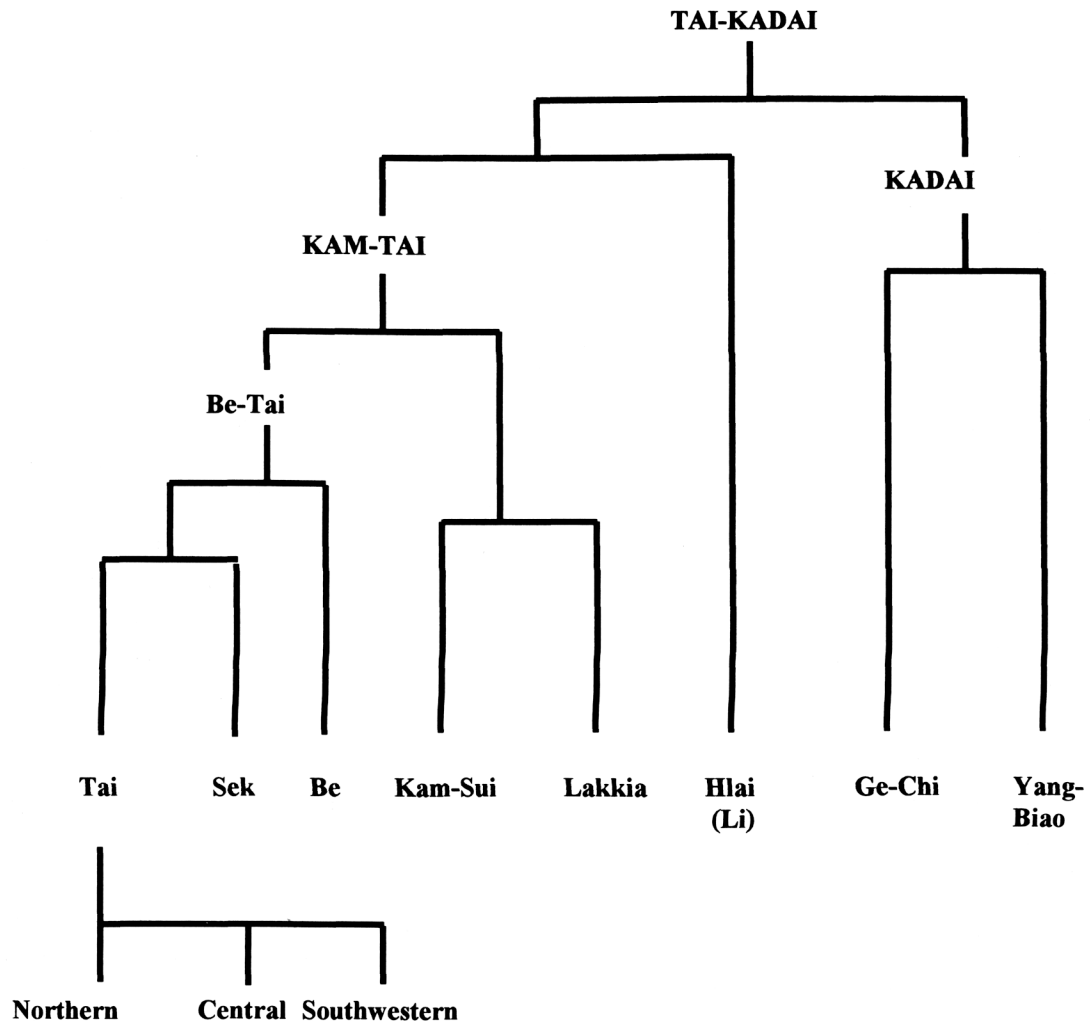

Figure 1. The main branchings of the Tai-Kadai ethnolinguistic family[2]

In support of the continuum theory, additional evidence has surfaced in the form of the etymology of Tai ethnonyms and from Old Chinese historical sources to bring us to a point where the interpretation of other more northerly, in particular Chu, Chinese history is possible, at least from an ethnolinguistic perspective. Hopefully this will provide an ethno-historical frame into which additional data may be placed as it becomes available.

[2]This scheme is somewhat outdated on the Kadai side where data has been sparse. Jerold Edmondson (p.c.) now believes that Laha, Buyang, Ain and Qabiao are closer to Kam-Tai, while Hlai, Gelao, Cunhua and Lachi are independent groups descending directly from the parent language.

2. Current locations of Sek and the Sách

2.1 The Sek

The locations of the Sek in Thailand have been amply recorded by Gedney and others so that it is not necessary to repeat that information here. In Laos, however, despite the efforts of Morev (1988), the most important and oldest locations have not been identified until recently in Chamberlain (1996 and 1997) technical reports for development projects that have not been widely publicized.

Furthermore, it is now clear that there are two distinct dialects of Sek, one in the district of Khamkeut in Borikhamxay Province, and one in the Province of Khammouane. The dialect of Khamkeut emanates from the village of Na Kadok in the Subdistrict of Nam Veo who trace their origins to the village of Phu Quan (/fuu kwang/) located on a small western tributary of the Ngàn Sâu in the Đức Tho administrative unit of Hà Tĩnh, Nghê An Province in Vietnam (just to the south of Vinh). According to villagers in Na Kadok, several families of Sek speakers still reside at this location. Speakers of this dialect are also found in Lak Xao Subdistrict, the villages of Ban Som Sanouk, Ban Nam Phao, and Ban Houay Toun; and in Khammouane[3] Subdistrict, Ban Na Tham Kwang (or Ban Nam Hoy). [see Map 2]

The second Sek dialect, the one which is found in Thailand, comes originally from Nakai District in Khammouane Province, and is still spoken in four villages there: Ban Toeng (/trɤɤŋ[1]/ in Gedney Text V), the subdistrict seat on the Nam Noy; Ban Na Meo; Ban Na Moey (/sin[4] naa[4] mɤɤy[4]/ in Text IV), and Ban Beuk (/buuk[4] naa[4] tɤɤ[3]/ in Text IV[4]). The last three are all located on the Nam Pheo, a tributary of the Nam Noy.[5] During the time of the Siamese occupation, most of the Sek went to hide in Ban Kwat Chèo, between Ban Yang and Ban Lom across the border in Vietnam.[6] The ones who didn't were taken to Nakhon Phanom. The villagers at Na Meo say they have been living in their present location for 286 years. [see Map 2]

The Brou at Kounè (the last village on the Nam Pheo and the closest one to Vietnam) relate that names of former villages there were Ban Kiin and Ban Tông

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[3]Originally, the modern province of Borikhamxay was part of a larger Khammouane Province, the name of which was taken from the town of Khammouane. This same Khammouane town, formerly a provincial capital, is now a subdistrict in Khamkeuth District in Borikhamxay Province.

[4]/naa tɤɤ/ 'southern paddy' was actually a separate village, now abandoned, about 2 km. from Ban Beuk.

[5]Note that all of these villages are located in Laos, not in Vietnam as implied in the Gedney materials. (cf. Hudak, p. xx)

[6] From unpublished fieldnotes of Khammanh Siphanxay, Institute of Cultural Research, Lao PDR.

Haak and that the original inhabitants were Sek. (interview with Xieng Souan, age 63, at Ban Kounè, 15 Feb. 1996).

The Sek village of /thruu[3]/ mentioned in Gedney Text V in a doublet with /trɤɤŋ/, is no doubt the place name known as Ban Thô, just across the border, next to the confluence of the Houay Thô and the Nam Amang. The adjacent mountain to the south is called "Phu Kun Tho" on some maps (probably /phuu khuun thoo/ 'Mountain + source + Thô'). There is so far no positive identification of a city called /sɔɔŋ[4]/ as mentioned in Text IV. The Brou center known as Meuang Bam (= /baan tăkɔɔ/ = Ban Amang) is possibly located at the junction of the Nam Amang and the Houay Taco.

In Gnommarath District, the villages of Pha Thoung and Phon Khène are Sek, said to have migrated originally from Ban Toeng.

Other Sek villages, such as those mentioned by Morev (1988), are found in Thakhek and Hinboun Districts. Many of these appear to be composed of Sek who after having been taken to Thailand, escaped back to Laos.

The Sek of Na Kadok live adjacent to Phou Thay, Tai Theng and Tai Moey villages to the north, and to two small villages of Makang (Vietic) to the south and west. They are active gold miners.

The Sek of Ban Toeng[7] live near to villages of Brou (Katuic), the Kri (Vietic) and the Phóng (Vietic), while the Nam Pheo villages are bounded to the east by the aforementioned Ban Kounè (Brou), and to the west by the Phóng.

In both cases, culturally, the Sek are wet-rice agriculturists who have established elaborate irrigation systems and terraced paddies. Evidence of these paddies may also be seen at the village of Na Vang in Nakai District. Located on the Nam Mone, this village was originally established by the Sek from Na Kadok when they were hiding from the Thai soldiers. After the soldiers departed, the Sek returned to their original village and were replaced in Na Vang by more recent Brou settlers who have maintained the terraces.

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[7]Ban Toeng is actually composed of two villages, the larger Ban Toeng which is located on the Nam Noy, and a smaller village called Ban Soek further away from the Nam Noy which contains a mixture of Sek and Brou households. Recently several families of Thémarou have been resettled here as well.

2.1.1 Ethnic-specific vocationality

The Sek and the Mène are famous in their respective areas for their associations with gold. The Sek at Na Kadok have extensive gold mines along the stream bed of the Nam Houay, and have been engaged in this occupation for as long as they can remember. Likewise, the Sek in Nakai, although not now currently involved with gold mining, have identified areas where they believe gold is located, and talk about the subject with great enthusiasm.

2.2 The Sách

As the pronunciation of the ethnonym /thrɛɛk[6] DL1/ is rendered in Thai as Saek or in Lao as Sèk, the Vietnamese pronunciation is transcribed as "Sách." The term in Vietnam, however, is applied to a group of Vietic speakers who inhabit the area of Vietnam that is immediately adjacent to the *Tai* Sek speaking area of Nakai in Laos. This cannot be accidental.

The Sách are considered by many Vietnamese scholars to belong to the Cheut (Chứt) branch of Viet-Muong. Others, however, consider that the so-called Cheut dialects, including Sách, belong to the Southeastern branch of Vietic (Diffloth p.c. cited in Chamberlain 1997) [see figure 2]. Unlike the other members of this branch, the Sách are primarily lowland paddy rice cultivators.

The name Sách in Vietnamese has been translated as 'division administrative équivalente au village' which according to Ngô Đ.T. (1977) was a name "recorded from the 15th c. in historical documents." Cadière (1905:349) translates Sách as "liste, registre, rôle d'impôt," perhaps indicating villages newly registered, or subject to tribute. The latter would seem reasonable given the apparent Chinese interest in the area since early times.

According to Cadière (1905) the Sách are mainly located on the upper Sông Giang (Nguồn Nây), at the southern end of the Ngàn Sâu valley and the beginning of the Sông Giang valley in the upper Năn and adjacent Son (Trốc) valleys, near the sources of each watershed. But Cuisinier (1948:44) reports at least five families living on the outskirts of the Nguồn village of Bải Dinh, along Route 15 (the extension of Route 12 in Laos) and claims that they have been replaced extensively by Nguồn settlers in Quảng Bình. Cadière makes essentially the same claim, and adds that the Nguồn seem to have originated further north in the Hà Tĩnh area. Cuisinier also notes a Mày village just 2.5 km south of Bải Dinh called Ca ây. (Bải Dinh is in fact only about 20 km from the current Sek settlements on the Nam Pheo. Thus it is reasonable to assume that the name, at least, whether Sách or Sek, was common to a specific area. Culturally, the Sách are considered as more sedentary than the other

"Cheut" groups, followed by the Mày. The others remain nomadic, at least in spirit, since many of them were "sedentized" in 1954 at Cu Nhái, only a half day's walk from Gia Ôć Sách (Nguyễn P.P. 1988:9). At the present time, according to Nguyễn V.M. (1996:142), there are 1,426 Sách speakers spread out among 7 communes in Minh Hoá District of Quảng Bình Province.

These locations are close to of the old Sek settlements on the Nam Pheo and the Nam Noy. The Nam Noy was in fact part of an old trail linking Laos and Vietnam called the Quỳ Hợp road. And since the Sek say they came from Vietnam originally, it must have been from this area. Whether they entered Laos first via the Quỳ Hợp road or via the Nam Pheo is problematical. Both appear to have been well-established routes.

3. Mène and related languages

The Mène language is found spoken in many villages in Khamkeut District[8] of Borikhamxay province, and in several other villages in the District of Vieng Thong.

The Mène in Laos all relate that they came originally from the area denoted by the doublet *Xieng Mène - Xieng My*, in Vietnam, which, due to the diligence of Dr. Frank Proschan of Indiana University (p.c.) who visited the area in 1993, we now know to be the old names for towns which appear on maps of Nghê An Province as Xiếng Líp and Bản Pốt respectively. The former is located at the confluence of the Nam Lip and the Nam Chou (Houay Cha Ha), near where the Cha Ha and the Nam Ngoen (Ngân) converge to form the Nam Souang (Houay Nguyên), while the latter is located further east on the Nam Ngân.[9] From this geographical location the proximity of the Mène to Quỳ Châu becomes apparent and is noteworthy because Finot's sample (1917) of the Quỳ Châu alphabet is a Mène type

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[8]From *Cham* subdistrict in the northern portion of the district bodering the Vietnamese province of Nghê An, including the subdistricts of *Lak Xao* (Ban Phon Hong, Ban Houay Keo); *Khamkeut* (Ban Phon Sa-at, Ban Phon Meuang Noy); *Na Heuang* (Lak 10, Lak 12, Na Khi); *Nam Sak* (Ban Phon Ngam, Ban Sop Khi); *Sop Chat* (Ban Sop Chat, Ban Sop Mong, Ban Phon Keo, Ban Sène Sy, Ban Tham Bing, Ban Phiang Pone); *Ka'ane* (Ban Thène Kwang, Ban Pha Poun, Ban Phiang Phô, Ban Sane, Ban Kok Feuang); *Phon Thoen* (Keng Kwang, Ban Kătô', Ban Kane Nha, Ban Keng Bit, Ban Sop Gnouang, Ban Vang Xao, Ban Tha Bak, Ban Kăpap); *Sop Pone* (Ban Sot, Ban Tha Sala, Ban Boung Kham); and *Tha Veng* (Ban Phon Xay, Ban Kong Phat, Ban Xam Toey, Ban Na Khwan, Ban Phou Viang).

[9]The difficulties of locating toponyms in Vietnam is complicated by the fact that so many places have more than one name as in the case of Xieng Mène and Xieng My mentioned here. For example, the Sông Cả River is also known variously as Nam Lam, Nam Pao, or Nam Noen depending on the portion of the river, the country, or the ethnicity of the people who use the name.

language, marked by such lexical items as /kɛɛt DL2/[10] 'to hurt; be ill.' Furthermore, the users of this same alphabet in Thanh Hoá are called "Yo" by Robequain (1929) and Robert (1941). The characters are archaic, and of unknown origin,[11] and written with brushes from top to bottom, right to left, like Chinese. Thus Mène and Yo represent a population of Tai speakers with a substratum of Northern Branch features, who at some point in their history were subjected to heavy Chinese influence.

It must also be remembered that the ethnonyms associated with the Northern Branch of Tai in Guangxi and Guizhou, and which are ultimately related to ethnonyms in Chinese histories of the area, are also found in this area south of the Hồng plain, in what is now Thanh Hoá, Nghê An, Borikhamxay, Khammouane, Nakhon Phanom, and Sakol Nakhon. Indeed "Viet" falls into this category as well as may be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Ancient ethnonyms

China	**Vietnam**	**Lao/Thai**	**M.C.**[12]	**Character**
I, Yí [13]	Yay, Dioi, Dươi	Yooy	**ngjiɐ̯* ^{C}	?
Ou, Ngo, Ngeou	Âu	Nyo, Yo	**nguo* ^{A}	K. 1284
Yue, Yueh	Việt	—	**ji*^{w}*ăt* (<*g-*)	K. 1348

[10]This lexeme, incidentally, appears to have a cognate in Kam-Sui, as well as a contact form in Cham (Austronesian).

[11]A recent article by Houmphanh Rattanavong (1996) suggests that the Quỳ Châu script is descended directly from an Indic Pallawa source transported to northern Vietnam in the first century AD. Since this and the following century was the beginning of a period which saw the introduction of considerable Buddhist influence from India into Giao-chỉ this hypothesis is plausible although the details have yet to be explicated. The presence of a large population of Indians and Central Asians in Giao-chỉ was well-recorded by Chinese historians, and was esoecially notable during the governorship of Shih Hsieh in the latter part of the 2nd century AD, where the rise of Buddhism flourished in the waning years of the Han (cf. Taylor 80ff). The ethnic identity of the main population of Giao-chỉ, however, was most probably Tai or Be-Tai, rather than "Vietnamese" in the modern sense of the term (Chamberlain 1992).

[12]MC = Middle Chinese. This is the Chinese reconstructed by Karlgren (1923) and called by him Ancient Chinese spoken in the 6th c. AD as distinct from his Archaic Chinese. The character references are to the 1923 work. Unfortunately Karlgren's reconstruction of Archaic Chinese published in 1957 under the title *Grammatica Serica Recensa* at Göteborg, is not available to me at the time of this writing. I will leave it to those more knowlegeable in the field of Chinese linguistics to offer more definitive reconstructions. But for the time being, these may serve as illustrative.

[13]Jerold Edmondson (p.c.) pointed out to me the 3-way distinction in the romanized syllable *Yi*, between Yi (Tibeto-Burman); Yì (Kadai); and Yí (Tai). Tai languages invariably show the C tone for this word.

In the first two cases the names apply to ostensibly Southwestern ethnoliguistic groups that emanate from Thanh Hoá and Nghê An. Indeed, Yo/Nyo is used by two linguistically different subgroups groups in Sakol Nakhon and Nakhon Phanom. Yooy, spoken in Sakol Nakhon in Thailand and in Gnommarath in Khammouane, is known only as an ethnonym in Thanh Hoá applied to a group formerly inhabiting this province (Robequain 1929).

Like the Sek, the Mène are associated with gold and the gold of Xieng Lip was famous. Luppe (1934) writes:

> Quelques centigrammes à chaque battée, de temps à autre, la chance d'une pépite (on en a vu atteignant 4 à 5 grammes, mais combien rares !). Il y a deux sortes d'or: Kham Ké (ou vieux) de couleur rougêatre et le Kham One (ou jeune) de couleur claire. Le premier vaut 4 à 5 piastres le Bac (4 grammes) et le second 3 piastres. La production locale annuelle n'atteint certe pas un kilo. Ce précieux métal est réputé et des comerçants vienne de très loin (*Luang-Prabang*) pour en acheter. Il est conservé dans les tubes pris dans l"extrémité d'une plume de paon et bouchés à la cire vierge. (71-72)

(After consideration, Luppe decided that exploitation was not commercially viable, at least by the French colonialists of that era.)

4. The homeland of proto-Vietic[14]

Given this ethnolinguistic distribution, the fact that Tai speakers originally occupied a north to south continuum which included the delta seems undeniable. So we should be able to at least offer a hypothesis for the homeland of the Vietnamese prior to their arrival in the delta. Therefore, in this section it is necessary to digress temporarily into the realm of Vietic.

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[14]Phong et. al. (1988), however, claim that the languages in Hà Tỉnh and Quảng Bình are collectively known as *Chứt*, a word they say means 'mountain' in the *Rục* language of the area, that is, 'mountain people,' referring to their preferred habitat in higher altitudes near river sources. This appellation, they imply, includes *Arem*, *Rục*, *Maliêng*, *Mày (Cươi)*, and perhaps the more sedentary *Sách*, but presumably excludes the sedentary *Nguồn*. Therefore, *Chứt*, *Nguồn*, and *Nhà Làng*, although they are more general terms, are not widely recognized. *Mường* on the other hand, aside from its being a term for a specific group of dialects quite distant from the Vietic speakers to the south, is too easily confused with the Tai ethnonym in Nghê An. As we have seen, even the term *Việt* is a Chinese word, but in lieu of any better proposals at the present, "Vietic" will be used here to refer to this branch, as has been the common practice in recent years in most academic literature published in English.

4.1 Vietic

"Vietic" is the name given by La Vaughn H. Hayes (1982, 1992) to that branch of Austroasiatic which includes Vietnamese, Meuang, and many languages spoken in Hà Tĩnh and Quảng Bình (in Vietnam), and Borikhamxay and Khammouane in Laos. All of the non-Vietnamese languages of this branch have been referred to collectively by such authors as Maspéro (1912) and Cuisinier (1948) as "Mường" (Meuang), an old Tai word meaning 'city' or 'settlement.' Cuisinier points out, however, that this term is used for these peoples primarily in Hoà Bình and Thanh Hoá, whereas in Nghê An "Mường" refers to Tai speakers, and the term *Nhà Làng* is used for the Vietic peoples. South of Nghê An, in Hà Tĩnh and Quảng Bình, *Nguồn* is used to designate the main group to which the other smaller groups are considered related. Since the groups referred to as *Nhà Làng* and *Nguồn* are less well known, the branch has for some years been known as "Viet-Meuang."

Although linguistic analysis sufficient to provide a definitive classification is lacking, some lexical comparison is possible based on available information. Some of this is set forth in Chamberlain (1997) but caution is advised in that the primary data is essentially ethnozoological in nature, which may or may not be reliable as a lexical domain for classificatory purposes.

The lexical evidence generally supports Diffloth's subgrouping (p.c.). This evidence, however, would suggest that the Kri-Phóng subgroup of Southwest Vietic be considered a separate sub-branch since many of the forms here differ radically from the other subgroups. Thus the following configuration (Figure 2) might be considered:

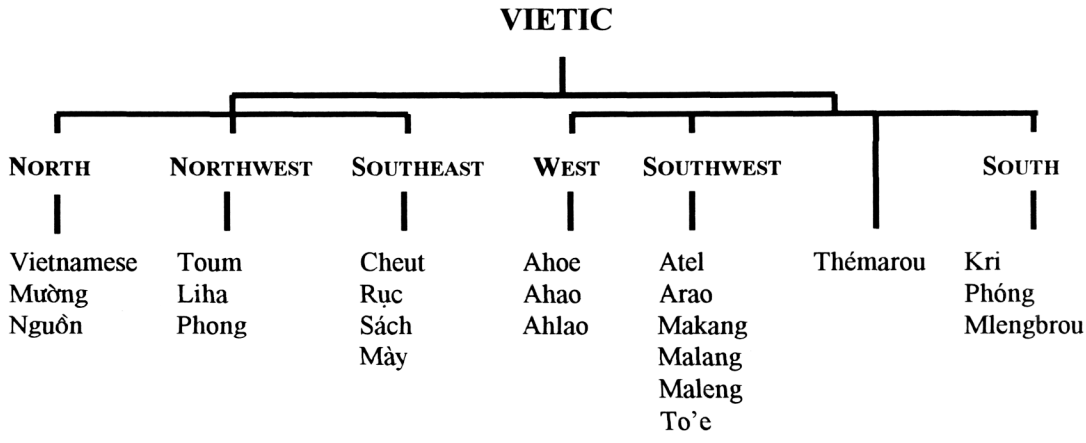

Figure 2. Suggested modifications to Vietic subgrouping

The status of Thémarou is still problematical, and in many cases seems to fall midway between Atel and Kri. And frequently, Mlengbrou shows forms completely at variance with the rest of Kri-Phóng and Vietic. Additional information on such groups as "Arem," Malieng, and Kata would, of course, be helpful as well.

4.2 Vietic groups in Laos

In Laos, Vietic ethnic diversity is especially manifest in and around the Nakai-Nam Theun Conservation Area and proposed extensions in Borikhamxay and Khammouane. Within the limited radius of Khamkeut, Nakai and the northern tip of Boualapha, 17 languages have been identified. Their considerable linguistic variety indicates a time depth for this branch of Vietic of at least 2000-2500 years. Until recently most of these groups lived in small bands as foraging nomads whose cultural traits became more specialized, their relationships with each other and their relationships with the forest transforming and diversifying to fill the eco-cultural niches postulated in Table 2 below.

The groups classed as Culture Type I, the true forest people, represent a cultural type that is practically extinct in Southeast Asia, and that is found nowhere else on the planet.

Beginning in 1976, the forest peoples were rounded up and brought out of their spiritual territories in the forest to live in villages, a way of life to which they were not capable of adjusting with the tragic result that the majority of them perished from the physical and psychological trauma of being relocated. The few remaining survivors live in three principle areas, the *Atel* at Tha Meuang on the Nam Sot; the *Thémarou* at Vang Chang on the Nam Theun and Ban Soek near the Nam Noy; and the *Mlengbrou* near the Nam One (but now living on the Gnommarath side of the Ak mountain). Other Vietic groups, located in the Noy and Sot river systems, have fared somewhat better as a result of their closer contacts with sedentary livelihoods, although they still face many difficulties resulting from the abrupt transition that was brought upon them.

An identical policy was implemented in Vietnam beginning in 1954 where according to Võ (1987) [cited in Phong 1988] the Vietic forest peoples were resettled at Cu Nhái, apparently one of the relocation centers, either in the west of Quảng Bình or southwest of the prefecture of Hương Khê in Hà Tĩnh (it is not clear which). *Arem, Rục, Maliêng,* and *Mày* were placed in these new sites. Regarding the Rục, at least, he reports that at least one third of them returned to the forest after suffering from malaria, liver and gastro-intestinal problems, and were reported living in caves.

Many of the Ahoe who inhabited the territory between what is now Na Tane Sub-district of Nakai and the village of Ban Na Va (now in Khamkeut District), were taken as refugees to Hinboun District during the war, and were later resettled in Nakai Tay and in Sop Hia on the Nakai plateau. The main population consists of 39 households in Nakai Tay and 20 households in Sop Hia.

Several groups of "Cheut" in Boualapha were resettled in village situations. Those in Ban Na Phao have been there for approximately 10 years, and those in Tha Xang for only two or three years. Other "Cheut" people are said to be in Pha Song, Vang Nyao, and Takaa. An unidentified group of "Salang" live at Ban Xe Neua further south, also in Boualapha District.

To the north, the Thaveung (consisting of two subgroups, Ahao and Ahlao) are now located in several villages near Lak Xao, although they appear to have originated in the vicinity of Na Heuang. The Liha and the Phong (Cham) and the Toum seem to have come originally from the northern Nghê An - Khamkeut border area, but have lived in Khamkeut for some time.

The proposed relationships of these groups within the larger frame of the Vietic branch of Mon-Khmer have been provided in Figure 2. Only the "Arem," Rục, Maliêng, Mày (Cươi), and the more sedentary Sách, groups are not known to occur in Laos.[15] According to information kindly provided by the *Lao Front for National Construction* in Thakhek, at least one *Nguồn* village is known to exist in Laos, Ban Pak Phanang in Boualapha District of Khammouane.

Within the Vietic group, considerable cultural differentiation has emerged and the groups have tentatively been classified into categories with ethnic consociations dependent upon (1) history, ethnolinguistic variation, and patterns of interethnic contacts; (2) modes of environmental utilization and arrogation and modes of production; (3) epistemological and ontological premises manifest in cultural traditions.[16]

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[15]These cultures are of a similar type to those found in Laos as described by Phong et. al. (1988), focusing on the *Rục*. He writes:

"..les *Rục* vivent dans la forêt profonde, cherchant refuge dans les cavernes ou sous des abris de fortune faits de branchages. Refusant le contact avec les étrangers, difficilement abordables, ils mènent une véritable existence de nomades chasseurs-cuilleurs dans la Cordillère annamitique. Comme vêtements, ces hommes portent des pagnes en écorce d'arbre séchée. Ils vivent trois mois par an de cultures sur brûlis pratiquées pendant la saison sèche, de janvier à avril."

This is the only mention of cave-dwelling, although other Vietnamese sorces may address this subject. No mention was made of this practice was made during our fieldwork in Laos.

[16]This system is based upon a modification of sets of phenomena suggested by Benjamin (1985) as applicable to the differentiation of Semang, Senoi, and Malay groups in peninsular Malasia.

Table 2. Cultural typology of Vietic groups in Laos

No.	Eco-spacial Type	Vietic Group
I	small group foraging nomads	Atel, Thémarou, Mlengbrou, (Cheut?)
II	originally collectors and traders who have become emergent swidden sedentists	Arao, Maleng, Malang, Makang, To'e, Ahoe, Phóng
III	swidden cultivators who move every 2-3 years between pre-existing village sites	Kri
IV	combined swidden and paddy sedentists	Ahao, Ahlao, Liha, Phong (Cham), Toum

This division into cultural types should not be construed as evolutionary in nature. Indeed, to the extent that we have been able to observe the Vietic peoples, their modes of existence represent something more akin to an ecological niching which is manifest in conscious preferences. Thus Atel people who have been residing in the village of Tha Meuang for over 20 years have still not adopted the village way of life, even though they are perfectly capable, intellectually and technically, of practicing agriculture. A return to their previous way of life is still their preference. As noted above, similar views are held by Vietic peoples who were relocated in Vietnam.

4.3 The Vietic homeland

Based upon degree of diversity, linguistic evidence therefore places the homeland of Proto-Vietic in the interior regions of what is now Borikhamxay and Khammouane Provinces, with some overflow to the opposite side of the Sai Phou Louang (Annamite) chain, to the north in Nghê An and to the east in Quảng Bình, that is, far south of the Hồng plain. Slightly further to the southeast, the greatest diversity of Vietnamese dialects occurs in central Vietnam, presumably the area that gave birth to the Vietnamese language. Some of the history that led to the peopling of the Red River Delta with Vietic speakers is treated in the following section.

The diversity of subsistence type is interesting as well, since in Vietic, which we estimate has approximately the same time depth as Tai, the entire range of livelihoods is found: hunting and gathering, swiddening, and irrigated paddy cultivation. For Tai, however, all groups are lowland wet rice farmers. In fact it seems fair to conclude that Vietic paddy cultivation is a comparatively recent development, and that the Tai term *Meuang* being applied to a branch of Vietic can only indicate a sedentized group in the eyes of the Tai. Thus we may reconstruct that

while the Proto-Vietics were hunter-gatherers, the Proto-Tais were sedentary wet rice agriculturists.

5. Chinese historical records of Nam-Viet

With the preceding Tai and Vietic overviews in mind, it remains now to examine the historical record for evidence that supports the ethnolinguistic picture. Of particular interest are those events which take place in or lead to the territory south of the Delta.

The geographical terminology applied to the territory of what came to be known as the nation-state of Vietnam is varied and complex, changing frequently throughout history according to the policies of one dynastic tradition or another. To simplify this situation somewhat, the usage of Edward Schafer (1967) has been adopted supplemented by relevant detailed information from Taylor (1983).

Schafer (5ff) writes that the oldest Chinese records divide the territory south of the Yangtze River into two provinces: **Chiang-Nan** (MC Kaung-nam), including the modern provinces of Kiangsi, Zhejiang Fujian and Hunan (we will see that this is an over simplification); and **Nam-Viet** (MC Nam-Ywăt), roughly Guizhou, Guangxi, and the northern portions of Vietnam.[17] Nam-Viet was further divided into **Lingnan** (MC Lyeng-nam) 'south of the mountain passes,' Guizhou and Guangxi, and, ***Annam*** *'the secured south,' modern Tongking and adjacent southern areas along the* coast. However, in ancient times, Lingnan was frequently used as a synonym for Nam-Viet.

I have proposed elsewhere (1991) that the ethnonym "Lao" is the oldest surviving term for "Tai-Kadai." It is used throughout Chinese history to refer to Tai-Kadai speaking peoples, a conclusion inferred from the fact that the term survives variously (but only) in the modern names for languages spoken in the three main sub-families of Tai-Kadai: Kadai, Kam-Sui, and Tai. Eberhard (1968) in his pioneering work on southern Chinese folklore, classifies Lao (Liao) as the oldest of the chains of cultural motifs, predating his Thai, Pa, and Yao cultures. He even goes so far as to propose the original location of the Lao culture at Chang-an, the center of the Zhou Kingdom (453).

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[17]I will use Yue to indicate the ethnonym used in the historical records, and Viet or Vietnamese to refer to the modern ethnic group and national language. It is indicative of the identity crisis faced by the Vietnamese that the two terms used to describe the main languages of the country, Việt and Mường both referred originally to speakers of Tai-Kadai languages. A similar situation occurs in France where the ethnonym Frank refers to a Germanic group.

What follows below in this section is a brief synopsis of some aspects of the early history of Vietnam and Southern China which serve to demonstrate especially south to north movement and other information that supports the general ethnolinguistic situation. It is not a coherent narrative of events or a complete picture of what is known of the history of this area.

5.1 The earliest evidence

I have discussed these points elsewhere (1991a, b), so I will summarize here the main aspects, especially as they relate to the classification of Kam-Sui-Tai languages.

1. The Kingdom of Chu appears between twelfth and eleventh centuries BC in the two Hu, but especially Hunan in the Tong-Ting Lake region of the Middle Yangzi. This I suggest was a Proto-Tai-Kam-Sui Kingdom.[18]

2. One king of Chu breaks away to Zhejiang in the ninth century BC and founds the independent kingdom of the Yue (not chronicled until the fourth century BC). This is the first split between Kam-Sui and Be-Tai.

3. In 333 BC Chou attacks Yue stimulating the exodus of ruling classes (Lo) to the south.

4. The "Hundred Yue" emerge as independent principalities throughout the region which we know today as Guizhou, Guangxi, Guangdong, and Tongking.

5. Eastern Ou in S. Zhejiang and in Fujian (Min Yue), which were absorbed by the Chinese at the end of the second century BC.

6. Nan-Yue is established at Northern Guangxi and Guangdong.

7. Western Ou (or Lo-Yue) from Southern Guangxi and Tongking to the Col des Nuages (Aurousseau 260).

8. Chu was destroyed by Qin in 223 BC.

5.2 Sources of ancient Vietnamese history

Virtually all historical records relating to Vietnam, from the earliest period to the tenth century (the fall of Tang) and beyond were written in Chinese by Chinese historians. The earliest extant writing by Vietnamese historians does not appear until the 14th century and even this history is written in Chinese demotic script.

[18]Placzek (1998:6-7) notes that the middle and lower Yangzi is the oldest wet rice producing area, with dates of 5000 BC and older being common, lending credance to this region as a Proto-Kam-Tai homeland, since wet rice production appears reconstructable at this time-depth.

Furthermore, it is clear from the ethnolinguistic evidence summarized above that the modern Vietnamese were recent arrivals in the Delta, and that the movement of Viet-Meuang peoples generally has been from south to north, not the reverse as most histories would have us believe. This historical bias has its origins, no doubt, in the Chinese historiographic point of view, which was indeed one of movements from north to south, the direction of the expanding empire.

At this point in time, I regard the work of Keith Taylor, especially his *The Birth of Vietnam* to be the most valuable resource for early Vietnamese history. The book's main weakness lies in its romantic nationalist endeavor to present Vietnamese history as a long struggle by Vietnamese indigènes against Chinese oppression culminating in the kingdom of Đại Cồ Việt, or national independence, at the end of Tang. Unfortunately, this viewpoint is only maintained at the expense of ethnic identity, the true indigenous view having been sacrificed to the historian's preoccupation with the nation-state. However, once this species of *political correctness* within the discipline is understood, the virtue of the work as a compendium of meticulous historical research drawn from primary Chinese sources, as well as a critical subsumation of the previous French scholarship of Maspéro, Aurousseau, Madrolle, Gaspardone, et al., is unequaled.

Taylor divides the early history of Vietnam, from the very beginnings to the establishment of national independence into six phases, a very useful periodization which is adhered to in the brief synopsis below. It must be remembered, however, that Taylor's analysis is long and prolix, and I have attempted to extract only that information which has bearing on the topic of this paper.

5.3 Lo-Yue [From early times to 206 BC][19]

Traditional Vietnamese early history, much of it based upon the fifteenth century *Lĩnh-nam chích quái*, describes the territory of the Red River Delta as being governed by Hùng Kings and Lạc Lords. The Hùng Kings are said to have ruled the Kingdom of Văn-lang in the region known as Mê-linh (Mi Ling) situated on the northwest corner of the Hồng plain at the confluence of the Red the Clear and the Black rivers (Taylor:3). Vietnamese authors of the *Việt sử lược* identify the earliest Hùng King as a contemporary of King Chuang of Chu (692-682 BC), the first of a line of eighteen generations, also claimed for the Hùng line. Thus Vietnamese history mimics the Chinese on this point. However archeologically, the area of Mê-linh, has

[19]According to Aurousseau, until the third century AD, the full name of Yue in Chinese historical texts was Yu-Yue, that is, /*jiu-j^{w}ät/ in reconstructed Ancient Chinese. Following this, it was used only in poetry until the sixth century, and then ceased to be used at all. There would seem to be no recorded trace of the first syllable in the local languages of the area, whether Tai-Kadai or Austroasiatic.

been shown to be the locus of the late Bronze Age culture of Đông-Sơn which began in the seventh century BC (Taylor:4). But given the lateness of the Vietnamese sources many questions remain on the issue of the Hùng Kings. (also cf Taylor 306ff)

The earliest historical mention of Văn-Lang is in Tang (618-907 AD), while the earliest mention of Hùng as a line of kings is said to be from the Tsin (265-317 AD) but even this is no longer extant and is taken from a fifth century source (Gaspardone 1955 cited in Taylor). Thus Hùng, as a line of kings in the Chinese sources is also problematical, but Jao Tsung-i's (1969) [cited in Taylor 306] association of the written Chinese character with *hsiung*, the clan names of kings in the ancient kingdom of Chu, would seem reasonable.

The first mention of Lạc Lords is by Chinese sources in the Han dynasty, a description that focuses on them between the periods of 111 BC (the year Chinese suzerainty was imposed) and 42-43 BC (when the Lạc Lords were defeated).

The Hùng kings were said to have been defeated by King An Dương (Ngan-yang), mentioned for the first time in the *Kuang chou chi* text of the Chin (Tsin) dynasty (Aurousseau:212) There he is described as the "son of the king of Shu." These texts describe only the defeat of the Lạc chiefs and do not mention the Hùng kings. Here also, in these Tsin dynasty texts, the first mention of Giao-chỉ and Cửu-chân is made in the *Chiao chou wai yu chi*, a Tsin recension of a first century Han work. According to Aurousseau (210) the dates of their founding as Chinese commanderies would have been sometime between 207 and 111 BC.

In the legend it is said that King An Dương founded the kingdom of Âu-Lạc after invading Văn-lang with an army of thirty thousand at the end of the third century BC, presumably following the invasion of Western Ou (Âu) by the Qin, which forced the rulers of that kingdom to flee south. He constructed the citadel of Cổ-loa in Tây-vu, an object of much myth, rich in emblems of power such as the golden turtle and the white chicken.

At the same time, to the east, a Qin commissioner named Chao To with greater sympathies for the south, proclaimed himself King of Nan-Yue (Canton), in opposition to the empire. Shortly after relations with Han were restored in 179 BC, Chao To attacked and conquered Âu Lạc. Han regained control of Nan Yue in 111 BC, but in Giao-chỉ, the Lạc ruling class remained in power until their defeat by Ma Yuan in 43 AD. Following this, history is silent as to the fate of the Lạc.[20]

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[20]For a hypothesis regarding the Lạc / Lo cf Chamberlain (1991 a, b, c).

It is of some interest to note that a number of the Lạc ruling families at this time fled south into Cửu-chân. This population was important enough that at the end of the year 43 AD Ma Yuan took his two thousand ships into Cửu-chân, to the Ma basin and south into what is now Nghê An. Here it is written in the *Shui ching chu* that from three to five thousand were captured and beheaded. (Taylor 41)

5.4 Han-Yue [206 BC - 220 AD]

During the Han, Nam Yue was divided into seven prefectures. In addition to Giao-chỉ[21] and Cửu-chân, a third province called Nhật-nam was added beginning south of the Hoành Sơn massive, that is south of Cửu-chân (Taylor 30). Han settlements began to emerge. Evidence of Han-style tombs have been discovered in Giao-chỉ, Cửu-chân, and northern Nhật-nam along the Giang River, but nowhere else in Vietnam (Taylor 54).

The second century was beset by no less that five major rebellions against Han authority in Nhật -nam and in Cửu-chân. This locus of discontent in the south continued into the tenth century, and marks two significant aspects of Vietnamese arrival in the Delta: south to north movement and a composition of Sinicized Vietics. More and more frequently throughout this period, attacks against Giao-chỉ were led by disenchanted Chinese expatriates with strong indigenous followings.

5.5 Giao-Yue [AD 220-589]

The Cham state of Lin-i was established in 192 by means of a rebellion in Tương-lâm by Ou Lien. Lin-i invaded Nhật-nam in 248 which it annexed up to the Cửu-chân border (Taylor 89). This inspired the people of Cửu-chân and even Giao-chỉ to rebel as well (90). Thus the pattern of unrest emanating from the south continued in this period.

During the early Chin, Giao Province added several new prefectures, among them Cửu-đức which was formed of the southern portion of Cửu-chân, in the plain of

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[21] Aurousseau (260) writes: "The first mention of *kiao-chi* as a vague designation of the southern countries is found in the *Li-ki* (trans. Couvert, I, pp. 295-296), and in the *Lu-che Tch'ouen-ts'ieou*. It is not until 207, the date of the creation of the first commandery of Kiao-chi by Tchao-T'o, that it may be established that the name Kiao-chi designates the Tonkinese territories. In my opinion this term in the beginning was essentially geographic; it designated territories and not a people. The fact that this toponym was a Chinese name of a commandery is conclusive in this regard. I do not know of another ancient commandery name, under the Ts'in or under the Han, which has had an ethnonymic value. It was only later that the name Kiao-chi, applied to the inhabitants of the commandery, became more widespread, first to the Tonkinese, and then to all the inhabitants of the Annamite countries."

the Sông Cả. This is likewise part of a pattern of increased specificity in administration of the south by the Chinese.

In 347 under the command of the usurper Wen (said to have been ethnic Chinese and a former slave), the army of Lin-i marched north through Nhật-nam to Hoành Sơn, and then on to Cửu-đức and Cửu-chân (Taylor 107). These hostilities continued until the 370s (109). With the demise of Tsin, the Đỗ family rose to power in Giao, beginning with Đỗ Viện who had served as prefect in Nhật-nam and Cửu-đức before being assigned to Giao-chỉ (110). This pattern of official assignment was repeated often, another example of south to north influence in Vietnam.

Around 424 Lin-i reinitiated its aggression, seizing Nhật-nam and raiding Cửu-đức, the king established the fortress of Khu-túc at the mouth of the Giang. From this position he was able to raid Cửu-đức (Taylor 115-116). The aggression of Lin-i was finally ended by a decisive Sung military campaign that began in 446 and devastated Lin-i. However, Nhật-nam soon fell under Lin-i authority once again by virtue of its geographical location. Following the defeat, however, the capital was moved from the its old location near modern Huế further south to Trà-kiêu, near modern Đà-nẵng (Taylor 118).

In summing up this period Taylor writes:

> It was at this time [the fifth century] that Giao's northern border was adjusted to the modern border between China and Vietnam in recognition of the natural frontier dividing the indigenous Vietnamese political system from imperial administration. The Vietnamese were no longer a part of an amorphous frontier jurisdiction as they had been under Han and Wu, a jurisdiction based on concepts of empire rather than on the indigenous culture. By detaching Ho-p'u and establishing Yüeh Province late in the fifth century, the Chinese realized that the Vietnamese lands were too far away and too un-Chinese to rule in the usual way. Thereafter, the Vietnamese were recognized administratively in a province of their own. (131)

Taylor goes on to note the fixing of the southern border at Hoành Sơn, and the imperial policy of not "tampering with the cultural frontier." Thus the "Vietnamese," who at this point in time in Giao-chỉ we must still regard as ethnically Tai, are described as belonging to the northern empire while descending from a southern culture, a characterization that is indeed well-suited to both the Tais in the north of Nam-Viet as well as to the ethnic Vietnamese in the south.

In the year 535, Đức Province was formed around the mouth of the Sông Cả, out of what had been Cửu-chân Prefecture (or southern Cửu-chân as it had been

known since the time of Chao To in the third century BC), and two additional provinces, Lý and Minh were named in the obscure valley of the Ngàn Sâu, a southern tributary of the Sông Cả skirting the lush rainforests of the Annamite Chain. It is likely that the sudden appearance of these two hitherto unmentioned provinces in the hinterlands is related to Chinese economic interest in gold, and perhaps secondarily, rhinoceros horn and kingfisher feathers, products that were plentiful in the area until recently. Although the records are not precise, I will speculate that Lý was in the valley of the Ngàn Sâu, while Minh was in the adjacent upper valley of the Sông Giang where a major town by that name is located.

The successful rebellion of Lý Bí in 541 likewise began in the south in Đức, and, again following the pattern of the disenchanted Chinese commander turned rebel, attacked north through Chu-diên and Ái (Taylor 135ff). Like the others, who came before and after, the culture and system of government they espoused was still that of imperial China. Interestingly, in the struggle that followed between Liang and Lý Bí, the followers of the latter are described in the sources as "Lao Chieftains." When Lý Bí was finally defeated, his elder brother Lý Thiên Bảo raised yet another army in Đức to attack the Liang forces to the north. He was defeated in Ái but escaped into the mountains with the "Lao" (143). This was in 547. Finally, according to later Vietnamese sources, a relative of Lý Thiên Bảo named Lý Phật Tử gained possession of western Giao in 557, ostensibly supported by the Lao of Ái, while Triệu Quang Phục retained the east. In 569/571 Lý Phật Tử defeated Quang Phục and took control entirely. (153ff) The historians of Sui maintained that Lý Phật Tử was an ethnic Li.

5.6 Sixth century [Sui:589-618]

In the Sui Dynasty, in the year 598, Ling-hu Hsi, military commander of Kuei and Giao, renamed several important areas. Tân-xương (and points west) became Phong, Đức became Hoan, and Hoàng (on the northern coast) became Lục (Lu). Then, in 604, Sui reorganized the administration once again, dividing all of Vietnam into three prefectures (as opposed to provinces): Giao-chỉ included the entire Hồng plain, Ái was converted back to Cửu-chân, and Hoan (formerly Đức) became Nhật-nam. (Taylor 158ff)

5.7 Tang-Yue [618-907]

5.7.1 Geography [see Map 1 - locations adapted from Taylor]

Tang began by reorganizing Vietnam yet again, this time into a number of small provinces under two "central authorities" (Taylor 169). The first administration included all of the provinces in the plains of the Hồng and the Ma, with Ái as the

most important province in the basin of the Ma. The second administration was at Hoan in the plain of the Sông Cả.

The reorganization was fixed in 679 with the formal establishment of the "Protectorate of Annam" (Annam = 'the pacified south'). In addition to the main provinces, "halter provinces" were established in order to pacify the many ethnarchs in the hinterlands. Kinh and Lâm (Lin), at the southern border near Hoành-sơn were named in 628 and 635 respectively.

Later, in 669, the southern border was more formally acknowledged with the setting up of Phúc-lộc also in the vicinity of the Hoành-sơn massive. It is described as having been "appropriated by migrating 'uncivilized Lao' in the sixth century." The details of this are more crucial because at some point in Vietnamese history, between the Tang Chinese sources and the later 14th century Sino-Vietnamese works, Phúc-lộc (Fu-lu) was relocated from the south to the north, to the northwest corner of the Hồng plain, a fate likewise shared by An-viên (An-yüan) and Đương-lâm (T'ang-lin). (Taylor 172, 327ff)

This topic was important enough that Taylor (327ff) devotes an entire appendix to its explication. He relates that according Chinese sources[22]An-viên was originally a district first noted in the Sui dynasty in Nhật-nam Prefecture (formerly Cửu-đức). In 622 An-viên was a district in Đức Province which became Hoan in 627. Between 639 and 669 this district was joined with Đương-lâm to become Đương-lâm Province. Finally, in 669 a district of Phúc-lộc was appended to Đương-lâm resulting in Phúc-lộc Province. It location appears to have been approximately at the Hoành Sỏn massive on border with Champa. Because they were changed so frequently, it is Taylor's opinion that in many Tang sources the terms Đương-lâm and Phúc-lộc were for the most part synonymous. But in the ninth century Phúc-lộc disappears entirely and is replaced by Đương-lâm.

Now these same three topnyms, in Vietnamese sources referring to the period following the fall of Tang in the tenth century, are relocated. And this is of vital interest to us here, because: (1) in represents a very specific movement from a location very near to the Vietic homeland in the south to the Delta of the Hồng River in the north; (2) Because the two most important Vietnamese independence leaders, Phùng Hưng (8th c.) and Ngô Quyền (10th c.) are said to have been born in Đương-lâm and Phúc-lộc respectively. Although perplexing on the surface, from a historical linguistic point of view the answer is obvious: Phùng Hưng and Ngô Quyền were

[22]Specifically the *Chiu T'ang shu, Hsin T'ang shu,* and *Sui shu,* [all in the *Pai na pen erh shih ssu shih* edition (Shanghai 1930-37)], and the *T'ai P'ing huan yu chi* [Taipei 1963], and *T'ung tien* [Shanghai 1902]. (Taylor 373-374)

born in the south and led the Vietnamese rebellions to their conclusions in the north.[23]

Returning to Tang reorganization, it is likewise of interest here that the inland provinces of Lý and Minh, instated during the Liang dynasty, were retained (only Lý had been renamed Tri in 598). According to Taylor's map (170), Tri lay north of Minh. As mentioned above, I would like to suggest that in fact Tri (Lý) encompassed the valley of the Ngàn Sâu, while Minh was located in the upper valley of the Giang where the toponym may still be found at Minh Hoá (or Quang Minh ?). Little is recorded from this area except for an uprising by "refractory Lao tribesmen" in the province of Minh. And "Lao" in this case could be none other than the Sek who must have been established there prior to the fifth or sixth centuries when Lý and Minh were created. Given the Sek ethnic-specific association with gold, and assuming there would have been little reason for the Chinese to proclaim these two inland provinces without economic motivation, I believe this hypothesis to be reasonably accurate. Also, as mentioned above, Lao and Li were consistently applied as ethnonyms for Tai-Kadai speakers.[24]

Another small inland province in the area of the upper Cả was established in 635 under the name of Sơn. Located near Xieng Khwang Province in Laos, this is approximately the location of the Mène gold mining area discussed above.

Diễn province was originally located just to the north of Hoan. It was incorporated into Hian about 650, but was reinstated as a province again in 764. Sơn was then made a part of Diễn.

Ái and seven other provinces were established in the basin of the Ma. Taylor regards this territory as a backwater in the center of the protectorate that was least affected by Chinese rule, and therefore "emerged in the tenth century as the original and most persistent center of the politics of independence" (173). In ethnolinguistic terms, I would rephrase this to say that Ái, especially the hinterlands, was a vacuum

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[23]I have discussed the similarities of Phùng Hưng and the epic hero Thao Hung Thao Cheuang at some length elsewhere (1991). Given this evidence and the difficulties surrounding the ethnicity of Cheuang, one possibility that might be entertained is that Cheuang was a Vietic leader struggling against a Tai speaking Giao. This would fit with the use of the terms Mène and Keo in the text, as well as with the defeat of Cheuang at the hands of Khoun Lo (Lạc), a distinctively Tai figure.

[24]Schafer, who is a better source on Tang ethnolinguistics, notes the following: "A tentative mapping would show the field burning Mak in the north on the border of Kweichow, speaking a 'Kam-Sui' language; the wet-rice growing Huang [Ghwang], Ning [Nung?], and others, speaking Thai languages, would appear throughout the west of Lingnan. Beyond these would be the Wu-hu [Western Ou], possibly of Vietnamese speech. Scattered about in remote places, but heavily concentrated on the coast and on Hainan, are the Li... Also on the shore south and west from Canton appear the Tan, whose ancient speech is quite unknown."

filled eventually by Mường speakers, the language closest to Vietnamese, whose language and culture exhibit Tai influence as opposed to Chinese. The adjacent province of Trường separated Giao from Ái on the coast.

On the northern coast of Giao, Lục (Lu) province (formerly Hoang) served both as a highway and a buffer in Giao relations with Kuangtung. Taylor (175) notes that in this role as interface between protectorate and empire, it was more often under the control of powers to the north.

Finally, Phong (Fêng) was strategically located at the junction of the Red, the Black, and the Clear. It held control over 28 "halter provinces" to the west and northwest to Yunnan, and provided protection for Giao from attacks initiated by the peoples living in these areas.

5.7.2 Vietnamese movements north

Taylor (191ff) reports that following a period of relative security until 705-706, Tang authority in Hoan weakened. In 722 a man named Mai Thúc Loan from a salt-producing village on the Hoan coast southeast of Hà Tĩnh (southern Nghê An) brought together people from thirty-two provinces, including Lin-i, Chen-la, and a hitherto unknown kingdom called Chin-lin ("gold neighbor"), altogether totaling four hundred thousand, and styling himself "the Black Emperor" he marched northward and "seized all of Annam." His success was short-lived and he was immediately attacked and killed by imperial forces from Kuang. While Taylor is perplexed by the nature of this event, why so many foreign elements should unite to mount such an attack, the answer seems obvious, that the core of this movement were not aliens, they were the true ancestors of the modern Vietnamese, Sinicized Vietic coastal frontiersmen, in large numbers, moving north. The Chinese army sent to put down the Black Emperor is said to have numbered one hundred thousand. Taylor (216) speculates that many of these soldiers remained, and that many were surely sent to Hoan where the rebellion began.

Vietnamese traditions have not highlighted this event, although Taylor (191) notes that the tombs of his parents and the citadel he erected are to be found near his birthplace, and a temple inscription in this area reads:

> The Tang Empire waxed and waned;
> The mountains and rivers of Hoan and Diên stand firm through the ages.

Given the Chinese historiographic underpinnings of Vietnamese history generally, the Black Emperor's lack of prominence is not surprising. We have already noted the previous pattern of south to north rebellions led by dissatisfied Chinese expatriate officials.

Following a brief mention of an uprising by a military commander of Diên, the next major local hero to appear in Taylor's treatment is Phùng Hưng. Since I have dealt in detail elsewhere (1991) with the close similarities between this story and that of the Lao epic of *Thao Hung Thao Cheuang* I will not repeat this here. But Taylor's interpretation of some of the names bears further scrutiny. After the death of Hưng, it is written in the Vietnamese sources[25] that Bồ Phá Lặc fought against Hưng's brother Hai chasing him into the mountains forever.[26] The Vietnamese word for 'father' which Taylor cites in his subsequent discussion of the posthumous title accorded to Hưng is Bố a conspicuous borrowing from Tai, not indigenous to Vietnamese as assumed by Taylor. It also needs to be reiterated at this point that the birthplace of Phùng Hưng was Đương-lâm, an old southern toponym moved north to Phong in the later Vietnamese histories, no doubt a factor of its being moved along with the ethnic Vietnamese rebels during the Tang.

Taylor (215) writes: "All of the major rebel figures of the ninth century came from Hoan, Ái or Phong." In 802 the Chams (Huan-wang), with collusion of Hoan and Ái, annexed these provinces for seven years until in 809 they were retaken by the Tang protector general of Giao named Chou. Chou captured the son of the Cham king along with the rebel governors of Hoan and Ái, and rebuilt the citadels there as a demonstration of the authority of Tang. (Taylor 226)

Dương Thanh was the first major rebel leader of the early ninth century. He was apparently from a Chinese family who served as governors of Hoan since the early eighth century following the defeat of the Black Emperor and Dương Thanh's family may have been members of that force. All of the major ingredients are found here: Vietic territory, Sinicizing influences, and south to north movement. (Taylor 227ff)

Also in ninth century, Đỗ Tồn Thành and his son Đỗ Thủ Trừng were anti-Tang Chinese immigrants from Ái. Đỗ Tồn Thành was the governor and military commander of Ái who was killed by the protector general Li Cho for siding with Lao leaders. The Đỗ family dated from the Ch'i and Liang dynasties (479-556). (Taylor 240)

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[25]The extant Chinese sources are not detailed. Taylor notes (331ff) that the hero's name in the Chinese sources is Dỗ Anh Hàn, the last syllable of which fits with one of Cheuang's names, *Cheuang Han*. The Vietnamese *Việt Điện u linh tập*, a fourteenth century text, cites a non-extant Chinese work, *Chiao chou chi*, by the protector general Chao Ch'ang (c. 791). Taylor also notes that the toponyms and titles used in the account are peculiar to Vietnamese historiography of the post independence period, not to Chinese history, so much may have been added or changed for political purposes.

[26]This is perhaps in Tai /phɔɔ^{B4} faa^{C4} lɔɔ$^{A/B4}$/ 'father+sky+Lo' or Khun Lo, who descended from heaven to defeat Cheuang in the epic, although 'father' has the wrong tone.

As another indication of unrest in the south, in 835 Protector General T'ien Tsao sent a general named Tang Ch'eng-ho pacify Hoan, and in the following year yet another military governor was sent there to assist him. (Taylor 235-236)

At the end of 862, Nan-chao which had been threatening Annam for some time, invaded with a force of fifty thousand men and Giao fell at the beginning of 863. Records state that one hundred fifty thousand Tang soldiers were killed or captured by Nan-chao and an unknown number fled to the north. Probably the highest portion were local recruits and it may be assumed that the victory of Nan-chao led to a severe reduction in population in the Delta. Nan-chao was driven out by Kao P'ien in 866. (Taylor 239ff)

Of interest, in the wake of the Nan-chao war and the weakened condition of Giao, are Taylor's remarks (248) to the effect that the existence of "two cultural currents" became clear: (1) the Tang-Viet Buddhist culture of Giao, militarily dependent upon Tang, and (2) the anti-Tang elements, many of whom had sided with Nan-chao and fled into the mountains with the attack of Kao P'ien.[27]

5.8 Tenth century: Establishment of the Vietnamese state in 965

A number of southern leaders lead the way to complete independence for Vietnam in the tenth century, including the following:

Đương Đinh Nghệ. A general from Ái who rebelled and ruled in Giao from 931, and was killed in 937. (Taylor 265)

Ngô Quyền. From Đương-lâm (one of the southern toponyms relocated north discussed above), the son-in-law of Đương Đinh Nghệ who was given a military command in Ái. He took control of Giao after the assassination of his father-in-law, defeated the Chinese from Canton in 938, and died in 944. His court is described as very traditionally Chinese. (Taylor 267ff)

Đinh Bộ Lĩnh. Succeeded his father who served as governor of Hoan under Đương Đinh Nghệ and Ngô Quyền, and, following the death of the king in 963, established the independent kingdom of Đái Cô Việt in 965. To accomplish this he relied primarily on support from his own army from Ái and an army of thirty thousand from Hoan led by his son. In good Chinese tradition he took the title of Emperor in 966. (Taylor 275ff)

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[27]Taylor relates these two groups to Vietnamese and Mường based on an article by Nguyễn Linh and Hoàng Xuân Chinh - Đất nước và con người thời Hùng Vương, in *Hùng Vương dựng nước*, edited by Ủy ban khoa học xã hội 3:91-112. Hanoi, 1973. Hayes (1992) however, having carried out a detailed glottochronological analysis, dates the separation of Vietnamese and Mường at 1255 ± 165 years, that is the twelth century at the earliest.

6. Conclusions

1. Sek is a small language with far-reaching implications. In the field of Comparative and Historical Tai it is the key to the reconstruction of Proto-Tai/Be-Tai initial consonants. For Tai and Vietnamese history, accounting for the location of Sek provokes a complete rethinking of the basic premises upon which that history has stood for many hundreds of years. The re-working of this history will entail the reinterpretation of Chinese historical records in the light of linguistic evidence from both Tai-Kadai and Austroasiatic.

2. Many questions remain unanswered. The precise dates when the ethnic Vietnamese actually replaced the Tai in the Delta are uncertain, but this must have occurred sometime between the seventh and the ninth centuries.[28] From an ethnolinguistic perspective the Vietics were originally non-sedentary inhabitants of the interior (as evidenced by their lack of an Indic-based writing system), one branch of which became heavily Sinicized (the Vietnamese) and another of which became heavily Taized (the Mường - cf. Condominas 1980).

Was Northern Tai split into two branches Ou and Yi, both of which were represented in the continuum south of the Delta? If so, as the evidence suggests, then to which group did Sek belong. And this leads to another interesting possibility that results from our suspicion that Sek is not the original ethnonym. That is, the example of Sek also gives us an example of entry from Vietnam into Laos that may also apply to Yooy, who are found only on the Nakai plateau and in adjacent areas of Gnommarath District along the foot of the lower Ak escarpment. Geographically they are the next-door neighbors of Sek. And the closest and oldest mention of this ethnonym appears in Robequain's monograph on Thanh Hoá (formerly Củu-chân and later Ái) where the "Yoi" are described as the oldest, but now extinct, population. Thus one hypothesis might be that the Yooy in Gnommarath are the Sek who became Southwesternized, whereas the Sek proper, were in fact the Yoi who remained on the east of the Cordillera, not arriving in Laos until approximately 300 years ago. To some extent this parallels the relationship of Mène and Nyo, the Nyo likewise having become Sothwesternized, probably through contact with Phou Thay beginning in Nghê An.

Note also that "Mường," a Tai word applied to the non-Sinicized relatives of Vietnamese in Thanh Hoá and Hoà Bình, is used as an ethnonym for Tai speakers in Nghê An, indicating that the Vietic Mường must have dispersed northward from this area, after adopting a sedentary livelihood under Thay Mường influence. What was the nature of this influence and what are the linguistic and cultural traces?

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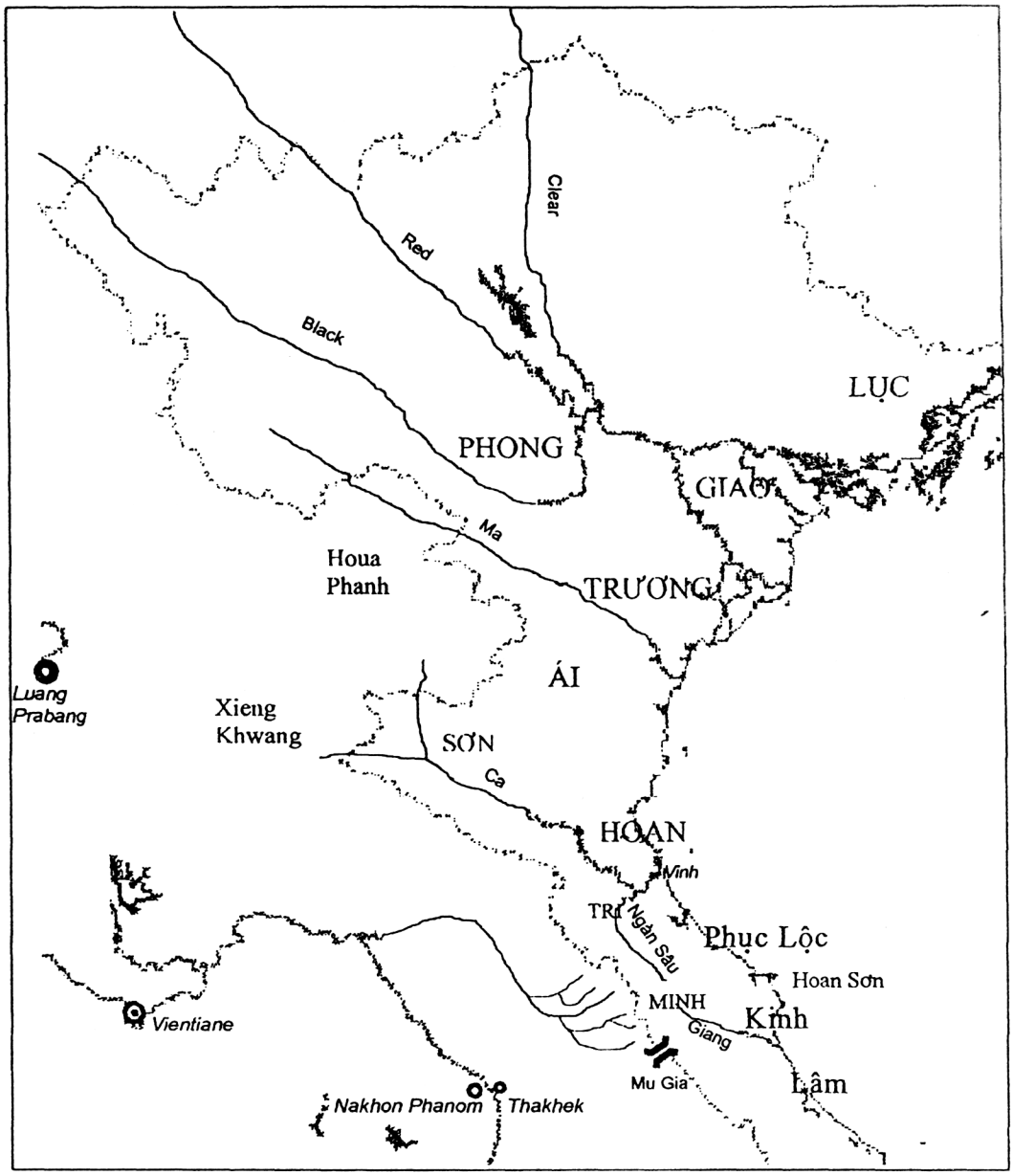
[28]The majority of Chinese loanwords in Vietnamese are of Tang (MC) origin (Vương 1975).

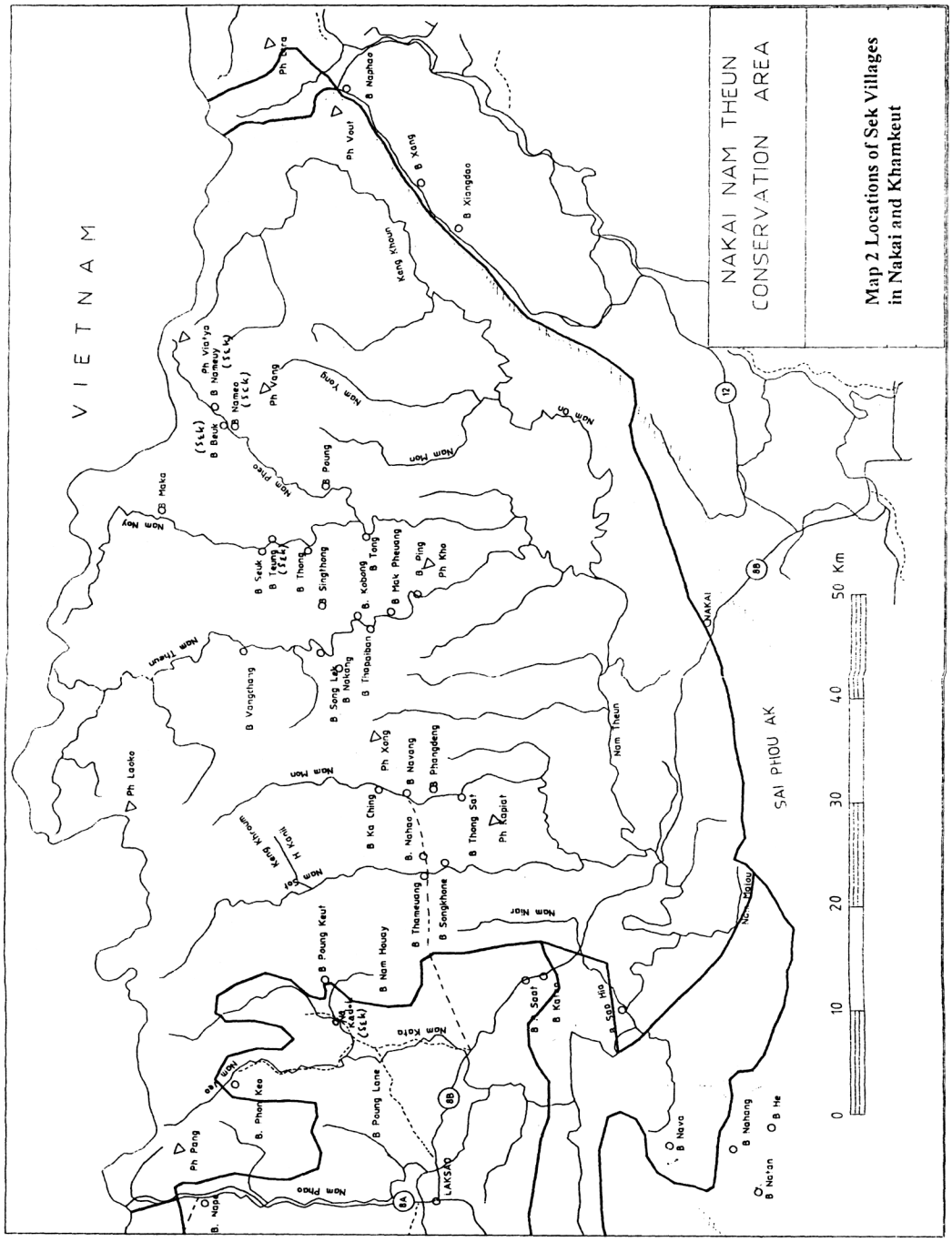
Finally, what is the ethnolinguistic history of Phong? Situated between the Đà and the Hồng (known as the Tè and the Tao to Tai speakers), it is also on the northern edge of Mường speaking territory. Phong was usually a willing participant of uprisings originating in Hoan and Ái. It is furthermore the ethnonym of several old Khmuic groups now located in Houa Phanh; an ethnonym for Vietic groups in Nghê An and Khamkeut; an administrative term in Black Tai and Lao; the personal name of important historical figures in Nghê An, Xieng Khwang, Louang Prabang, and Sip Song Chu Tai; and it appears in the province names of Phong Thô and Phongsaly. The true origins of this word so far remain a mystery.

3. To return to Haudricourt's original question, linguistic, historical, and cultural evidence indicates that Sek is the southernmost extension of what was at one time a continuum of Northern Branch Tai or Be-Sek speaking peoples extending from the Sino-Vietnamese frontier through the Hồng delta to the modern provinces of Thanh Hoá, Nhgê An, Quảng Bình, and eventually to their present locations in Laos, in Khamkeut District (adjacent to the Ngàn Sâu valley in the former Chinese Province of Lý or Tri) and in Nakai District (adjacent to the upper Giang valley, the former Chinese Province of Minh). That is to say, it did not result from the abrupt displacement of an original population from Guangdong.

Map 1. Annam in the seventh century



Map 2. Locations of Sek villages in Nakai and Khamkeut.



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