Mon-Khmer Studies

Volume 42

Author: Darren C. GORDON Title: *A selective Palaungic linguistic bibliography*. Pages: xiv-xxxiii Date received: 4/6/2013 Revised text accepted: 18/10/2013 Copyright for this paper vested in the author Released under Creative Commons Attribution License

Volume 42 Editors: Paul Sidwell Brian Migliazza

ISSN: 0147-5207 Website: http://mksjournal.org

Published by:



Mahidol University (Thailand)



SIL International (USA)



A selective Palaungic linguistic bibliography

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Abstract

This paper is an effort to present a selective bibliographic compilation of Palaungic linguistic resources, as well as relevant cultural resources, totaling 341 bibliographic entries. It is expected that the resulting catalogue will list a significant portion of materials pertaining to Palaungic languages. However, this collection of resources should be considered a living document. It is assumed that there are other available resources still to be included, as well as new resources to be added. Exploring the scope of available Palaungic materials provides a forum through which those who work with or have an interest in Palaungic languages, and the people who speak them, can consult, utilize, and contribute together.

Keywords: Palaungic, bibliography

ISO 693-3: vwa, bgk, blr, bvp, cno, dnu, huo, xko, kkn, lbn, lwl, lcp, zng, mml, mqt, pce, rbb, pll, pnx, ril, stu, tlq, uuu, prk, wbm, yin

1. Introduction

This project began as research and compilation of published materials concerning Palaungic languages while I was teaching at Payap University, Chiang Mai in 2006. This research was originally published as a working paper (Research Project #206) at Payap University, July 2006. Much of the research was conducted at Payap University, Chiang Mai University, David Thomas Library in Bangkok, online, and through colleagues working with or with knowledge of Palaungic languages and potential resources. Since that time it has been revised minimally, both in 2007 and in 2009. However, both the original working paper and the subsequent revisions were not widely available to researchers working with Palaungic languages. In order to make this bibliography of Palaungic languages more accessible for use as well as amendable to the contributions from a great many others, the bibliography has been revised and presented here.

In addition to making this research more accessible, I want to make explicit two other primary reasons for this research. First, this project is aimed at benefiting those who work among Palaungic peoples; a benefit in both knowing what materials are available as well as identifying what areas of research may still be lacking. It is hoped that the bibliographic information presented will become a helpful resource for those who are working with or have an interested in Palaungic languages. Secondly, this project is intended to highlight, as others have, the need for further exploration as to the scope of the Palaungic language family. There has been increasing work in this regard (Sidwell 2009, 2011), but significant questions remain.

The bibliographic compilation presented here is an attempt to capture published sources of language-related work relevant to Palaungic languages. Many times this means that they are the primary focus of the research, but other times the focus on Palaungic languages within the research is secondary, though considered to be of interest and relevance to the Palaungic researcher. Besides linguistic research, some cultural studies are also included, especially when it seems that there is relevant language embedded within the cultural research presented (e.g. Sprenger regarding Lamet) Additionally, most of the sources collected have come from English, with only a few from French, German, Thai, Lao, and Chinese. This is seen, not as a lack of resources in these languages, only a deficiency of the researcher. It is hoped that even with this published bibliography that more non-English sources could be offered as suitable for future inclusion and made available.

2. Palaungic languages

Palaungic languages comprise one branch of the Austroasiatic language family found interspersed throughout Mainland Southeast Asia as depicted in figure 1. The identification of the related languages known as Palaungic find their beginning with Schmidt (1904, 1906). His identification listed four language clusters: Palaung, Wa, Riang, and Danaw. Later, Sebeok (1942) identified these languages as Salowen Basin, totaling five language clusters, adding Khamûk (or

Khmu) and Le-met, yet leaving out Danaw. The inclusion of Lamet is later affirmed by Diffloth (1977a) and Mitani (1978) and is undoubtedly the result of Izikowitz's anthropological work among the Lamet, though Sebeok neglects to identify his work in his bibliography. A decade later, Shafer (1952) also presents Palaungic as comprising 5 language clusters. His list is identical to Schmidt, with the inclusion of Angkou (after Palaung) and moving Riang before Palaung (ostensibly to show a greater relationship between them). Pinnow (1959) increases the Palaugnic language clusters to six with the only difference being the inclusion of Lawa.

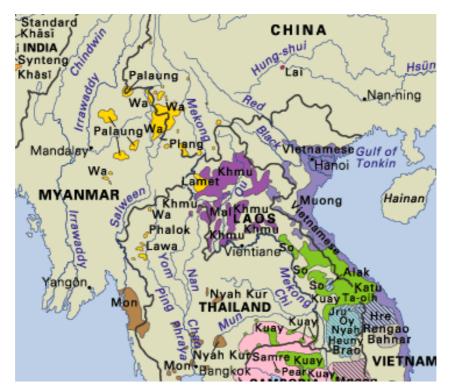


Figure 1: Palaungic languages (in yellow) are located in northern Thailand, Myanmar, southern China and Laos. Source: Adapted from Encyclopædia Britannica (1997), fair use for research purposes

A growth of interest in Palaungic languages in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in more classifications being offered for these languages (Thomas 1964, Thomas 1969, Thomas and Headly 1970, Thomas 1973, Diffloth 1974, Ferlus 1974, Diffloth 1977, Mitani 1978). Much of this work was conducted using a lexicostatisical methodology, as historical reconstruction was rather underdeveloped. Perhaps the most important paper of this period was Diffloth (1977), which was then followed by an equally significant monograph length study three years later (1980). The former presents a classification of Palaungic languages based on select phonological developments, while the latter reconstructs the lexicon and phonology of the Waic sub-branch of Palaungic languages.

Diffloth's (1977) classification (see Figure 2) is a strongly nested tree with the highest branch separating Danaw from the rest of the branch, in this respect repeated by Sidwell (2011) also based upon historical phonology. Later, for reasons that are not explained, Diffloth (1982) revised back his classification, demoting Danaw to a sister of Palaung-Riang, and recapitulating Mitani's (1978) division of Palaungic into Eastern and Western sub-branches (see Figure 3).¹

¹ The author wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Paul Sidwell in the understanding and writing of this section, analysing the research of this era as it pertains to the development of Palaungic classification.

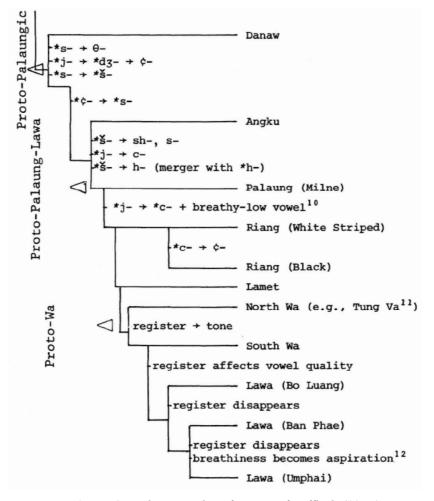


Figure 2: Palaungic classification of Diffloth (1977) with historical phonological justifications.

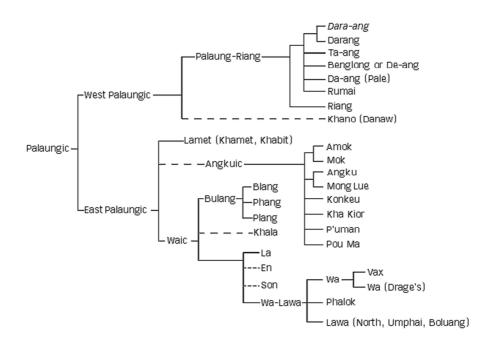


Figure 3: Palaungic classification of Diffloth (1982) with minor modification by Kasisopa (2003), reproduced from Deepadung (2009).

In order to emphasize the difficulty that yet remains among researchers attempting to delineate and classify Palaungic languages, there are two other recent classifications given for comparison in figures 4 and 5.

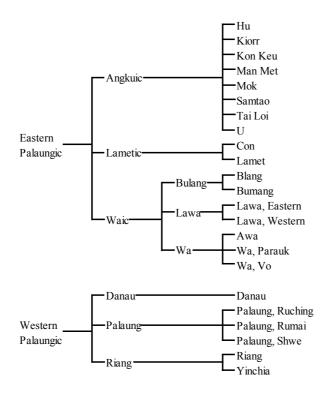


Figure 4: Palaungic Classification based on Palaungic languages listed in Lewis, Simons, and Fennig (2013).

As can be seen from the classifications presented by Sidwell (2011) and Lewis, Simons, and Fennig (2013), divergent issues such as whether Angkuic should be considered Eastern or Western Palaungic, and the position of Danaw, reveal a significant need for continued comparative research on the Palaungic languages. This is further revealed in the differences of Palaungic subgroupings as found in the Khasi-Palaungic relationship suggested by Sidwell (2011). It has also been suggested (e.g. Kingsada 2003) that Mang, along with the possibility of Khang, comprise a North Palaungic group and, additionally, Sidwell (2009:132-133) discusses proposals to link Pakankic (Bolyu, Bugan, Mang (?)) with Palaungic.

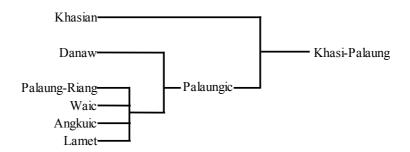


Figure 5: Khasi-Palaung relationship as proposed by Sidwell (2011).

The incongruity of both the internal and structural classification of Palaungic languages makes the work of bibliographical compilation more complicated. Since, even up to the present, there still remains a variance as to which languages are identified and included in the Palaungic branch, one must still decide which language will be considered for inclusion within the bibliography. As a guide, the most recent Palaungic classifications, although divergent, present a fairly reasonable framework for these decisions. Other languages that are only singularly

3. Concluding Remarks

Although it is hoped that this project is comprehensive, it is assumed that there will inevitably be some valuable additions and corrections needed. In light of this, this Palaungic bibliographic compilation should be viewed as a living document that will continually be amended and updated. Therefore, all comments, corrections and additional contributions of bibliographic information are welcome and can be sent to: dgordon@simpsonu.edu. Also, to inquire about an updated version of this bibliography, please send an email to the preceding address.

In addition, it is acknowledged that another desirable improvement upon the effectiveness of this project would be to include annotations for many of the entries, as well as categorizing the resources according to the primary topic covered in each bibliographic item. Therefore, an annotated version of these sources is forthcoming and is currently planned for publication in 2015. Along with annotations, these sources will also be organized according to the principal linguistic domain found within each bibliographic entry.

With all the efforts in putting this bibliography together, it is a reminder that there is much left to be learned about Palaungic languages. Hopefully, above all, this project will support and encourage the furtherance of interest and community-centered research among Palaungic peoples.

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