The place of Lawi, Harak and Tariang within Bahnaric

THERAPHAN L-THONGKUM
Chulalongkorn University

1. Introduction

In December 1995, I had a great opportunity to visit the province of Sekong, Lao PDR for one week. I learned a great deal about the Mon-Khmer speaking peoples and their languages during this field trip. I managed to collect about 450 Lawi and Tariang words, and 680 Harak words, which made this field trip more worthwhile than I had expected before my departure from Bangkok. I should have got more work done, if good data on the ethnic minorities of Sekong had been available, and if I had had a chance to educate myself about the Bahnaric languages and had prepared a suitable word list.

When I returned from my Sekong field trip, I was asked by Gérard Diffloth, James R. Chamberlain, Jacques Lemoine and Michel Ferlus about the Lawi, i.e., are they Austronesian or Austroasiatic? I was puzzled by this question. I believe that the Lawi cannot be anything else but an Austroasiatic (Mon-Khmer) speaking group.[1] They even reminded me of the Lavɯə? of Maehongsorn. I found out later why this puzzling question was asked. Chazée (1995) says in his book: *Atlas des ethnies et sous ethnies du Laos* that "the Lawi can be Austronesian, a separate branch of ...l /-r/ is preserved, whereas it was lost in Jorai, Rhade and Cham."[2] In order to be scientific as a linguist should, I will try my best to show in this paper some good evidence that Lawi is a West Bahnaric language.[3] As for Harak and Tariang, classification is still problematic.

2. The Mon-Khmer ethnic groups of Sekong

Sekong is a new province in Southern Laos. It had been a district of Salavan until 1984 when it became a separate province. Sekong shares borders with Salavan in the North and Northwest, with Champasak in the Southwest, with Attapue in the South and with Quang Nam Danang (Vietnam) in the East. From the municipality of

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[1]I have worked on several Mon-Khmer languages of different branches; Lavɯə?, Paroak, Mla Bri, T'in, Mon, Nyah Kur, Kui, Bru, Chong and Samre; my experience does help me identify with no difficulties that Lawi is a Mon-Khmer language.

[2]I would like to thank Ferlus for translating and sending me this information from Paris via the e-mail.

[3]At the 4th Pan Asiatic Linguistic Conference organized by Mahidol University in January 1996, I had a chance to discuss briefly with Diffloth and let him quickly look at my field notes. He suspected that Lawi was West Bahnaric.

Sekong to the Lao-Vietnamese border which is about 104 kilometres, there used to be a trail for the local people to travel on foot. In 1993, a temporary dirt road was constructed. However, travelling by means of modern vehicles is impossible in the rainy season. The province of Sekong comprises four districts; Tha Taeng, Lamam where the Governor's Office is located, Kaluem, and Dak Chueng which shares a border with Quang Nam Danang. The province is cut across by the Sekong River. This river, the backbone of the province, starts in Vietnam and meets with the Mae Khong River in Cambodia.

The population of Sekong is about 63,000. It consists of thirteen Mon-Khmer ethnic groups and one Lao-Tai group (Lao Lum or Lowland Lao). The distribution of the thirteen Mon-Khmer ethnic groups in the four districts of Sekong is as follows:

Tha Taeng:	Katu, Suai, Nge'(Kriang), Taliang (Tariang)
Lamam:	Alak (Harak), Lawi (Hawi), Ta'oi (Ta'uas), Laven, Suai, Kaseng
Kaluem:	Katu, Nge' (Kriang), Chatong
Dak Chueng:	Taliang (Tariang), Yaeh, Dakkang , Taliw (Tariw)

The number of villages, households, families and population are given in Table 1.[4]

Table 1 The census of Mon-Khmer ethnic groups in Sekong

Ethnicity	Villages	Households	Families	Total population
Katu	78	868	1,604	16,725
Taliang (Tariang)	78	2,717	2,772	11,407
Harak (Alak)	76	2,272	2,309	9,505
Yaeh	28	991	996	6,435
Nge' (Kriang)	36	537	592	5,505
Ta'oi (Ta'uas)	8	170	178	1,641
Suai	3	163	169	1,610
Laven	5	280	281	1,526
Taliw (Tariw)	10	145	176	1,236
Chatong	4	77	83	638
Lawi	3	58	185	492
Kasaeng	-	4	4	15
Dakkang	(no data)	(no data)	(no data)	(no data)

The Lawi[5] language data were collected at Ban Lawi Phang (or Fang) Daeng, Lamam district. At this village, there were about 151 Lawi speakers. Three Lawi villages are found in Lamam: Ban Phang Daeng, Ban Lam Phan and Ban Noy. The Lawi used to live in Dak Chueng district near the Lao-Vietnamese border,

[4]I feel thankful to Than Thongdee Sotthisarn, the Head of Information and Public Relations of the province of Sekong, Lao PDR, for providing me with the figures in Table 1.

[5]The villagers told me that they used to call themselves /sa'wʏŋ/.

around Huay Yuet, Phu Luang. After the second Indochina war, they moved to the places where they live at present. The data on Harak were collected at Ban Kasang Kang and Ban Pa-aw; the informant was originally from Ban Kasang. Ban Kasang Kang is also located in Lamam district. It comprises five hamlets: Ban Kasang Luang, Ban Kasang Kang, Ban Kasang Noy, Ban Man and Ban Sating. The population of Kasang Kang village is 501. There are also 4-5 Harak villages along the dirt road from the municipality of Sekong which is in Lamam, to Dak Chueng. The Tariang village where the language data were collected is Ban Dak Lan, Dak Chueng district. The Tariang living here migrated from Ban Chavan which was in Phu Thong Ko. The population of this Tariang village is about 150. During the Vietnam War, Dak Chueng was bombed badly; therefore, there are no old Tariang villages left. The places where they live at present are new settlements.

3. Lawi as a West Bahnaric language

Thomas (1979:174-177) gives 34 vocabulary items which he thinks are distinctively northern, southern or western. Unfortunately, I have only 25 items in my Lawi data. The good ones, about 13 items, are chosen to illustrate that Lawi should be classified as West Bahnaric. In Table 2, the Lawi words are from my field notes, the rest are the generalized forms given by Thomas (1979).

Table 2. Lexical evidence for West Bahnaric

	Gloss	Lawi	Other West Bahnaric languages
(item 1)	'sky'	krom	krum (Laven, Oi, Nyaheun)
(item 2)	'star'	pa'tɔr	mantuar (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen)
(item 4)	'flower'	pur	pur (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 6)	'tooth'	pʏŋ	puŋ (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 18)	'egg'	klɛ	kle (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 23)	'tail'	sɔi	suay (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 25)	'five'	sʏŋ	song (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 27)	'sand'	pi'hac	phaic (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 29)	'horn'	ta'kuai	takuy (Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen)
(item 30)	'fish'	tru	tru (Cheng, Laveh, Oi, Brao)
(item 32)	'ear'	ta'pit	pit (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 33)	'head'	taəih	tuyh (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)
(item 34)	'shoulder'	pa	paw (Cheng, Laveh, Laven, Oi, Nyahuen, Brao)

Based on the lexical evidence as illustrated in Table 2, there is no doubt that Lawi is a West Bahnaric language.

4. The place of Harak and Tariang

After comparing my Harak data with Alak words given in Thomas (1979) as examples, I am certain that Harak and Alak are dialects of the same language. A comparison of Alak and Harak vocabulary can be found in Table 3. The two major differences in Table 3 that should be noticed are: **-l* is retained in Alak but becomes

/-ɯ/[6] in Harak; and the old implosives merge with voiced obstruents which still remain voiced in Harak but become voiceless in Alak. Some of the differences probably stem from different ways of transcribing. Harak does not have vowel length distinction.

Table 3 Comparison of Alak and Harak vocabulary

Gloss	Alak	Harak
'sky'	prah	brah
'star'	pliŋ	bluŋ
'tree'	qlong	lɔŋ
'flower'	bakao	papau (?)
'nine'	-ciin	ti'ʨin
'tooth'	saneɲ	ʨa'neɲ
'launder'	roh	ra'ɾɔh
'woman'	akan	kan
'egg'	katap	ka'tap
'tail'	ting	teŋ
'five'	pram	pa'dam
'year'	hanam	ha'nam
'sand'	phaic	ba'hac
'grass'	bat	bat
'horn'	ke	ŋ̊'kai
'fish'	ka	ka
'monkey'	amau	mau
'ear'	tor	ṇ̊'to
'head'	kǎl	gaɯ
'uncooked rice'	pahay	pa'hai
'ten'	cit	ʄit
'buffalo'	karpiu	ki'piu
'liver'	klǝm	klʏm
'tree trunk'	tǝm	tʏm
'seven'	tampŏh	ti'pɔh
'leg'	ciŋ	ʄɯŋ
'salt'	pioh	bɔh
'bird'	cem	ʨem

As for Tariang, what I have in hand for a comparison is a three-page handout by Diffloth distributed at the 24th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Bangkok-Chiangmai, October, 1991. Ten Tarieng words from this handout are compared with the ones from my Tariang field notes. There is no doubt that they are dialects of the same language.[7] Vowel length in Tariang is not distinctive.

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[6]I think that the /-l/ should be 'velarized or dark /l/'. Generally speaking, the phonetic characteristic of velarized [ɫ] is somewhat similar to closed back unrounded vowel [ɯ].

[7]Diffloth told me that he had many thousands of Tarieng words which he collected from a Tariang refugee.

Table 4 Comparison of Tarieng and Tariang vocabulary

Gloss	Tarieng	Tariang
'one'	muːy	mui
'two'	baːr	bar
'three'	pɛː	pɛ
'four'	puan	puan
'five'	pədam	baˈdam
'six'	traw	taˈrʏw
'seven'	təpʌh	taˈpʏh
'eight'	təŋhaːm	taŋˈham
'nine'	kəceːn	kaˈʧen
'ten'	kəjit	kaˈʄit
'star'	braɲ	taˈmeɲ
'tooth'	pɨːŋ	puŋ
'tail'	sɔːy	suai
'head'	tuːs	tus
'left (side)'	cəʔiaw	paʔiau
'nail'	kərias	kaˈrias
'four'	puan	puan
'elephant'	ruas	ruas
'tuber'	buəm	buəm
'axe'	cuəŋ	ʧuəŋ

The place of Harak and Tariang within Bahnaric is problematic, i.e., specialists of Mon-Khmer comparative and historical linguistics have different opinions and also change their minds as time goes by and more data are available. *At one point, Alak was classified as a Katuic langauge. A short summary can be* given as follows:

Harak (Alak, Harlak, Harlaak)
- Katuic (Thomas 1966 and 1973, Thomas and Headley 1970)
- West Bahnaric or Laven-Brao (Matras and Ferlus 1971, Huffman 1986)
- North Bahnaric or Bahnar-Sedang (Thomas, cited in Ferlus 1974, and in Parkin 1991, Ferlus, personal communication in 1996)
- Central Bahnaric (Thomas 1979)
- Northwest Bahnaric (Diffloth, personal communication in 1996)

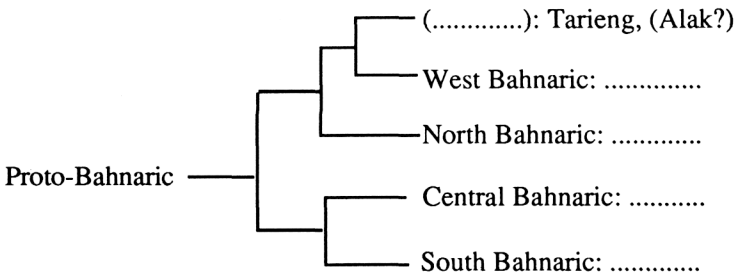
Tariang (Tareň, Tareng, Triêng, Tarieng)
- Katuic or So-Souei (Ferlus 1974)
- West Bahnaric or Laven-Brao (Ngô Đúc Thịnh and Trương Văn Strieng, Taliang Sinh, cited in Ferlus, 1974)
- Northwest Bahnaric (Diffloth, personal communication in 1996)

In section 3 of this paper, I have already proved that Lawi is a West Bahnaic language. If Lawi is West Bahanric, then, I do not think that Harak and Tariang are

West Bahnaric. Thomas (1979) and Diffloth (personal communication in 1996) agree upon dividing the Bahnaric branch into five sub-branches:

Thomas (1979)	Diffloth
- North Bahnaric	- West Bahnaric
- South Bahnaric	- Northwest Bahnaric (Alak, Tarieng)
- West Bahnaric	- North Bahnaric
- Central Bahnaric (Alak)	- Central Bahnaric
- Eastern Bahnaric	- South Bahnaric

Diffloth (1991:2) proposes the following Bahnaric dendrogram:



The unlabeled (.....) is now named "Northwest Bahnaric" (Diffloth, personal communication). Unfortunately, an explanation and other details are not available. Twelve lexical items, which are among the thirty-four recommended by Thomas (1979), are selected from my Lawi, Harak and Tariang field notes to show where Harak and Tariang may fit. Lawi words are included in Table 5 in order to be used as references since we know for sure that it is West Bahnaric.

Table 5 Classification based on lexical evidence

Gloss	Lawi	Harak	Tariang
'sky'	krom (W)	brah (Katuic)	pliŋ (N)
'star'	pa'tɔr (W)	bluŋ (N)	ta'meɲ (S)
'flower'	puɯr (W)	pa'pau (S)	ʔa'piər (W)
'tooth'	pʏŋ (W)	tɕa'neɲ (N)	puɯŋ (W)
'egg'	klɛ (W)	ka'tap (N)	ka'lɛh (W)
'tail'	sɔi (W)	teŋ (N, S)	suai (W)
'five'	sʏŋ (W)	pa'dam (N, S)	ba'dam (N, S)
'sand'	pi'hac (W)	ba'hac (W)	braɕ (N, S)
'horn'	ta'kuai (W)	ɲ̊'kai (N, S)	ʔa'kuai (W)
'fish'	truɯ (W)	ka (N, S)	ka (N, S)
'ear'	ta'pit (W)	n̥'to (S)	tuŋ (N)
'head'	tuəih (W)	ɠauɯ (N)	tus (W)

Ferlus suggests the word 'paddy' to be investigated for the classification ; he points out that it should be /cEh/ in West Bahnaric but something else in other

branches of Bahnaric (Ferlus, personal communication in 1996). My data confirm his opinion: 'paddy' /tɕɛh/ (Lawi, W), /m̥'ba/ (Harak, N) and /ʔa'ba/ (Tariang, N).

The twelve lexical items in Table 5 and an extra one suggested by Ferlus do show that Lawi is West Bahnaric, whereas Harak and Tariang have a mixture of northern, western and southern elements; therefore, it is difficult to say exactly where they fit. I think that this is one of the reasons why Thomas (1979) places Alak in the Central sub-branch, "a very loose central group" and Diffloth proposes a new sub-branch, namely, "Northwest Bahnaric".

To help the Mon-Khmer specialists find a proper place for Harak and Tariang from phonological grounds and to illustrate some of the patterns of Lawi, Harak and Tariang vowel correspondences, forty-eight additional words are given. They might also be useful for a reconstruction of Proto-Bahnaric vowels. Proto-North-Bahnaric forms reconstructed by Smith (1972) are also given. (See Table 6.)

Table 6 Examples of Lawi, Harak and Tariang vowel correspondences

Pattern of correspondence			Gloss	Lawi	Harak	Tariang	Proto-NB
ɐɤ/ia/ai	aɯ	aɬ	'wind'	ka'jaɤ	ki'jaɯ	ki'jaɬ	*kayal
			'I'	ʔaɤ	ʔaɯ	ʔaɬ	*aw
			'mortar'	ta'pia	ta'paɯ	ta'paɬ	*apăl
			'see'	tai	taɯ	taɬ	-
iɛ	e	ia	'good'	ti'niɛm	lem	liam	*lem
			'fingernail'	ka'niɛh	ki'neh	ka'rias	*čaqneyh
			'root'	riɛh	reh	ʔa'rias	*reyh
			'hail'	priɛɤ	pre	priaɬ	*prĕl
iɛ	ai	ɛ	'bamboo (kind of)'	ʔa'tiɛ	n̥'dai	dɛ	-
			'bamboo (kind of)'	liɛ	lai	tɕa'lɛ	*pale
			'husked rice'	phiɛ	pa'hai	ba'hɛ	*phe
			'three'	piɛ	pai	pɛ	*pe
ɔ/ɔi	o/oi	ua	'monitor'	ta'kɔt	ta'kot	ta'kuat	-
			'child'	kɔn	kon	kuan	*kon
			'four'	pɔn	pon	puan	*pun
			'shin'	pɔih	poih	puas	*poyh
			'elephant'	rɔih	roih	ruas	*royh
uo	u	uə	'path'	truoŋ	n̥'tuŋ	truəŋ	-
			'axe'	tɕuoŋ	tɕuŋ	tɕuəŋ	*čùŋ
ɤ	ɔ	a	'seven'	pɤh	ti'pɔh	ta'pah	*tapa̰h
			'launder'	ra'rɤh	ra'rɔh	rah	*rṵ̀h
ɯ	i	iə	'banana'	prɯt	prit	priət	*prĭt
			'flower'	pɯr	pau (?)	ʔa'piər	-

ai	ai	e/a	'tendon'	sa'sai	sa'sai	sa'se	-
			'fruit'	plai	pa'lai	ple	*plèy
			'pestle'	ʔa'rai	ʔa'rai	ʔa're	*adrèy
			'stretch (arm)'	laih	laih	plas	-
ui	ui	u	'hot'	puih	puih	pus	-
e	i	i	'centipede'	ka'ʨhep	ka'ɟɟip	ka'ɟɟip	*ɢaqɲ̃ip
			'ten'	ʨhet	mi'ɟɟit	ka'ɟɟit	*jə̀t
			'die'	ket	sit	ʨit	-
			'kill'	ka'ʨet	ka'sit	ʔa'ʨit	-
uɔ	ɔ	ɔ	'salt'	puɔh	bɔh	bɔh	*qboh
			'white'	mpuɔk	bɔk	bɔk	-
			'pipe'	kuɔk	kɔk	kɔk	-
			'take'	ʨuɔk	ʨɔk	ʨɔk	-
ia	a	a	'crab'	ka'tiam	ka'tam	ka'tam	*katam
			'water'	tiak	dak	dak	*qdak
			'two'	piar	bar	bar	*qbar
iau	au	au	'bear (n.)'	ɕi'kiau	ʨa'kau	ʨa'kau	-
			'coconut'	piau	ba'brau	brau	-
			'sugar cane'	ka'tiau	ka'tau	ka'tau	*katau
o	ɔ	o	'light (fire)'	ʨoh	ʨɔh	ʨoh	-
			'breast'	toh	tɔh	toh	*tuh
			'lung'	si'sroh	si'sɔh	soh	*suh
			'back porch'	ʔa'roh	n̥'drɔh	ʔa'ros	-
uəi	ui	uəi	'smoke (n.)'	ɲuəi	ɲui	ɲuəi	*qñùy

The examples given in Table 6 seem to indicate that each language has its own historical phonology. I begin to doubt whether Harak and Tariang should be placed within the same sub-branch of Bahnaric, i.e., Northwest, as suggested by Diffloth. Perhaps, we need a more suitable name for a kind of loose or flexible sub-branch in which the Bahnaric languages, such as Harak, Tariang and so forth, can fit, since this type of language has a combination of western, northern and southern characteristics. On a lexical basis, Harak has more northern and southern vocabulary, whereas Tariang has more western vocabulary. In Dak Chueng district where the majority of the Tariang live, there are also other Mon-Khmer ethnic groups, i.e., the Yaeh (perhaps Jeh, a North Bahnaric language), Dakkang and Tariw. I hope to go back to Dak Chueng again so that I can work with the Dakkang and Tariw, then, I will be able to contribute much more to Mon-Khmer linguistic studies.

Acknowledgements

The Sekong field trip was conducted under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. Without the supervision and

encouragement of Her Royal Highness, the kind co-operation and arrangements of the Lao Embassy in Bangkok, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the local authorities of Sekong province, this field trip would not have been possible, especially to Dak Chueng district. I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and to all of the Lao authorities. A lot of thanks go to my Lao Thoeng friends who kindly performed different functions, i.e., as drivers, cooks, guards, amateur road repairers, interpreters and informants. Last but not least, I feel thankful to my colleague, Suvanna Kriengkraipetch, and to our Lao coordinator, Khamphan Anlavan, for their companionship during the field trip. Without them, the Sekong trip would not have been as pleasant and successful as it was.

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Received: 22 August 1996

Faculty of Arts
Chulalongkorn University
Phayathai Road, Bangkok