Comparative reconstruction

- In Jan 2011 I compiled a set of 750 etymologies comparing:
  - Lyngngam, Khasi, Pnar, Amwi
- Of these 600+ have AA etymologies
- These are now available online at:
  - http://sealang.net/monkhmer
Reconstruction: consonants (1)

- General features:
  - Sonorants are generally unchanged
  - Prevocalic obstruents are restructured:

\[
\begin{align*}
pAA & \quad > \quad pK \\
*p; *t; *k & \quad > \quad *p^h; *t^h; *k^h \quad (+ \text{rarely } *p, *t, *k) \\
*b, *b; *d, *d & \quad > \quad *b; *d \\
\end{align*}
\]

(no examples of prevocalic *g found, lack of data)
Reconstruction: consonants (2)

- Palatals / sibilants are more interesting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lyng.</th>
<th>Khasi</th>
<th>Pnar</th>
<th>War</th>
<th>Amwi</th>
<th>pK</th>
<th>pAA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>[tʃ]</td>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>cʰ/s</td>
<td>*cʰ</td>
<td>*s, *c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td>tʃ</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>*j</td>
<td>*j</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>*s</td>
<td>*c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difficult to justify pK *c, confused correspondences suggests that old loans explain voiceless stops.
I suggest pK *cʰ by analogy with *pʰ, *tʰ, *kʰ
Reconstruction: consonants (4)

- Pre-consonantal obstruents
  - System is conservative, resembles Khmer superficially
  - Both plain and aspirated stops well attested
  - Tendency for aspirates before sonorants (contrastive or prosodic? – still not clear)
Reconstruction: consonants (5)

- Word final consonants; moderate changes:
  - pAA *-l > zero/n
    - *priøl > pK *phria
    - *kiøl > pK *khia
    - *diøl > pK *dian
  - pAA *-s > t
    - *priøl > pK *-noc
    - *?as > pK *?at
    - *kpaas > pK *knpaat
  - pAA *-h > t
    - *kiøh > pK *khiat
    - *cuh > pK *prsut
  - pAA *-? > zero
    - *ca? > pK *bcha
    - *ka? > pK *kha

- ‘hail’
- ‘cucumber’
- ‘tracks’
- ‘heart’
- ‘to swell’
- ‘cotton’
- ‘deer’
- ‘bellows’
- ‘to feed’
- ‘fish’
Reconstruction: vowels (1)

- General remarks:
  - Standard (Written) Khasi does not preserve all vowel pK distinctions
  - Pnar dialects appear to be more conservative
  - War, Amwi innovative, especially raising/fronting of *aa, *ɔɔ variously to ii, ia etc. and dissimilations e.g. *aj > ua, *aw > ia
  - Length contrast collapsing in War/Amwi, and to some extent across the branch
Reconstruction: vowels (2)

Examples of vowel developments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pK</th>
<th>Wr.Khasi</th>
<th>Amwi</th>
<th>gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*-maaw</td>
<td>máw</td>
<td>jmia</td>
<td>‘stone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ksəw</td>
<td>ksew</td>
<td>ksia</td>
<td>‘dog’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*rwaj</td>
<td>rwái</td>
<td>rwua</td>
<td>‘to sing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*bnaj</td>
<td>bnai</td>
<td>pnuai</td>
<td>‘month’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*sma</td>
<td>sma</td>
<td>smi</td>
<td>‘bad smell’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*khla</td>
<td>khla</td>
<td>khli</td>
<td>‘tiger’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*khnaaj</td>
<td>khnái</td>
<td>khnɛ</td>
<td>‘rat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*kti</td>
<td>kti</td>
<td>tɛ</td>
<td>‘hand’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reconstruction: vowels (3)

pK vowel inventories:

* / ii un in i u
  ee ɛ ɛ ɛ ɛ ɛ
 ia aa a /

+ a small number of *e in open syllables (?)
Reconstruction: vowels (4)

It seems that earlier *e(e) and *o(o) were lost through mergers:

*o(o) > to o(o) and u(u)
*e(e) > to e(e) and i(i)

WrKhasi *ia, *ie have complex correspondences, mostly < from *əə, *ɛɛ, but I find no regular patterning

WrKhasi e < ə, ɛ, sometimes long
Reconciling geography & phonology

- Pnar area is divided by Standard Khasi =>
  - Pnar resembles a relic area
  - Khasi looks like an innovative form of Pnar that gained prestige and then spread outward (Daladier suggests intruded from NE: pers. com.)
- War/Amwi highly innovative peripheral sub-group
- Lyngngam < language shift by Garo speakers
Schematic reconstruction

Lyngngam emerges as Garo speakers undergo language shift

Shillong zone confusion of diphthongs & central vowels

pKhasian ≈ prePnar

War emerges as long/short is lost & vowels restructure
**Lexicostats: Sidwell (2009)**
Che can be interpreted as consistent with reconstruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lyngngam</th>
<th>Khasi (Shillong)</th>
<th>Pnar (Noksia)</th>
<th>War (Amlarem)</th>
<th>Amwi (Weidert)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51 80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lyngngam: -677-----: -946------: -898------:
Khasi (Shillong): -931-----' | | |
Pnar (Noksia): -----------835-----' | |
War-Jaintia: -----------932------: -775------'
Amwi (Weidert): -----------858------'
External relations?

- Hypotheses:
  - 3\textsuperscript{rd} branch of Northern Mon-Khmer (Diffloth)
  - Coordinate AA branches transitional between NMK and Munda ??
  - Sub-groups with Palaungic (Sidwell)
Phonology

pPalaungic vowels by Sidwell (2010):

*ii, *i
*uu/u
*ee (*eʔ/eh) *ｅｅ, *ｅ
*ε, *ia *aα, *a
*oο (*oʔ)
*ɔɔ, *ɔ

System is not quite the same, but note striking parallels:
- lack of *ua diphthong while *ia is retained
- creeping loss of long/short, initially by mergers causing asymmetries in distribution of rhymes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pPalaungic</th>
<th>pKhasian</th>
<th>Khasi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*(l)*aar</td>
<td>*aar</td>
<td>?ar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*snaam/saam</td>
<td>*snaam</td>
<td>snam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*rnsiim</td>
<td>*trchim</td>
<td>trsim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*suuk</td>
<td>*chuk</td>
<td>Amwi su?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*(Danaw nok)</td>
<td>*chnok</td>
<td>Khasi ?hu?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*taŋ</td>
<td>*thaŋ</td>
<td>Khasi thaŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*krmeʔ</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Amwi trme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*səlɛʔ</td>
<td>*slap</td>
<td>Amwi slaʔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋŋj</td>
<td>*ŋŋi</td>
<td>Khasi ŋŋi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ʔom</td>
<td>*ʔum</td>
<td>Khasi ?um</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*ŋŋkɛes</td>
<td>*dnkʰɛɛt</td>
<td>Khasi dŋkiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*(Danaw kiet^{1,3})</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This list is far from complete!
Other branches?

Khmu’, Mal/Thin have ʔom ‘water’ but the word is not general in Khmuic:

Khsingmul: ʰɔ:t
Phong: ʔaʔanŋ
Hat/O’du: ʔaj

Vietic, Mangic show /saam/ for ‘bleed’ or ‘blood’ but Khmuic has the more general AA /maam/ < *mhaam

Nicobarese, e.g. Nancowry ʔä, resembles *ʔaar, but the explanation is not obvious
Khasi-Palaungic?

- It is easy to compile Khasi-Palaungic isoglosses.
- The same isoglosses are problematic when compared to other AA branches.
- Given the geographical distance/obstacles it is difficult to explain isoglosses as loans.
- Therefore, Khasian looks like a sister of Palaungic.
Homeland and migration

- Khasian does not look ‘old’, not really diverse, splits into 2 distinct dialect chains
- Internal factors suggest historical movement E > W
- It could have diverged from a single ‘small’ language approx. 2000 years ago (±500 years) as the most far-flung of the Palaungic dispersal
- The route through upper-Burma and NE India is well known, followed many times in history, such as by the Tai into Assam in 1200s.