

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:

pAA > pK

*p; *t; *k > *p^h; *t^h; *k^h (+ rarely *p, *t, *k)

*b, *b; *d, *d > *b; *d

(no examples of prevocalic *g found, lack of data)

Reconstruction: consonants (2)

- Palatals / sibilants are more interesting:

Lyng.	Khasi	Pnar	War	Amwi	pK	pAA
c [tʃ]	ʃ	c ^h	-	c ^h /s	*c ^h	*s, *c
ʃ	ʃ	ʃ	tʃ	c	*ʃ	*ʃ
s	s	s	s	s	*s	*c

Difficult to justify pK *c, confused correspondences suggests that old loans explain voiceless stops

I suggest pK *c^h by analogy with *p^h, *t^h, *k^h

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
 - *priəl > pK *phria 'hail'
 - *kiəl > pK *khia 'cucumber'
 - *diəl > pK *dian 'tracks'
- pAA *-s > t
 - *priəl > pK *-noot 'heart'
 - *ʔas > pK *ʔat 'to swell'
 - *kpaas > pK *knpaat 'cotton'
- pAA *-h > t
 - *kiəh > pK *khiat 'deer'
 - *cuh > pK *prsut 'bellows'
- pAA *-ʔ > zero
 - *caʔ > pK *bcha 'to feed'
 - *kaʔ > pK *kha '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:

pK	Wr.Khasi	Amwi	gloss
*-maaw	máw	ɟmia	'stone'
*ksəw	ksew	ksia	'dog'
*rwaj	rwái	rwua	'to sing'
*bnaj	bnai	pnua	'month'
*sma	sma	smi	'bad smell'
*khla	khla	khli	'tiger'
*khnaaj	khnái	khne	'rat'
*kti	kti	te	'hand'

Reconstruction: vowels (3)

pK vowel inventories:

*/	ii		uu	i		u	
	ɛɛ	əə	ɔɔ	ɛ	ə	ɔ	
	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 ɔ(ɔ) and u(u)

*e(e) > to ε(ε) and i(i)

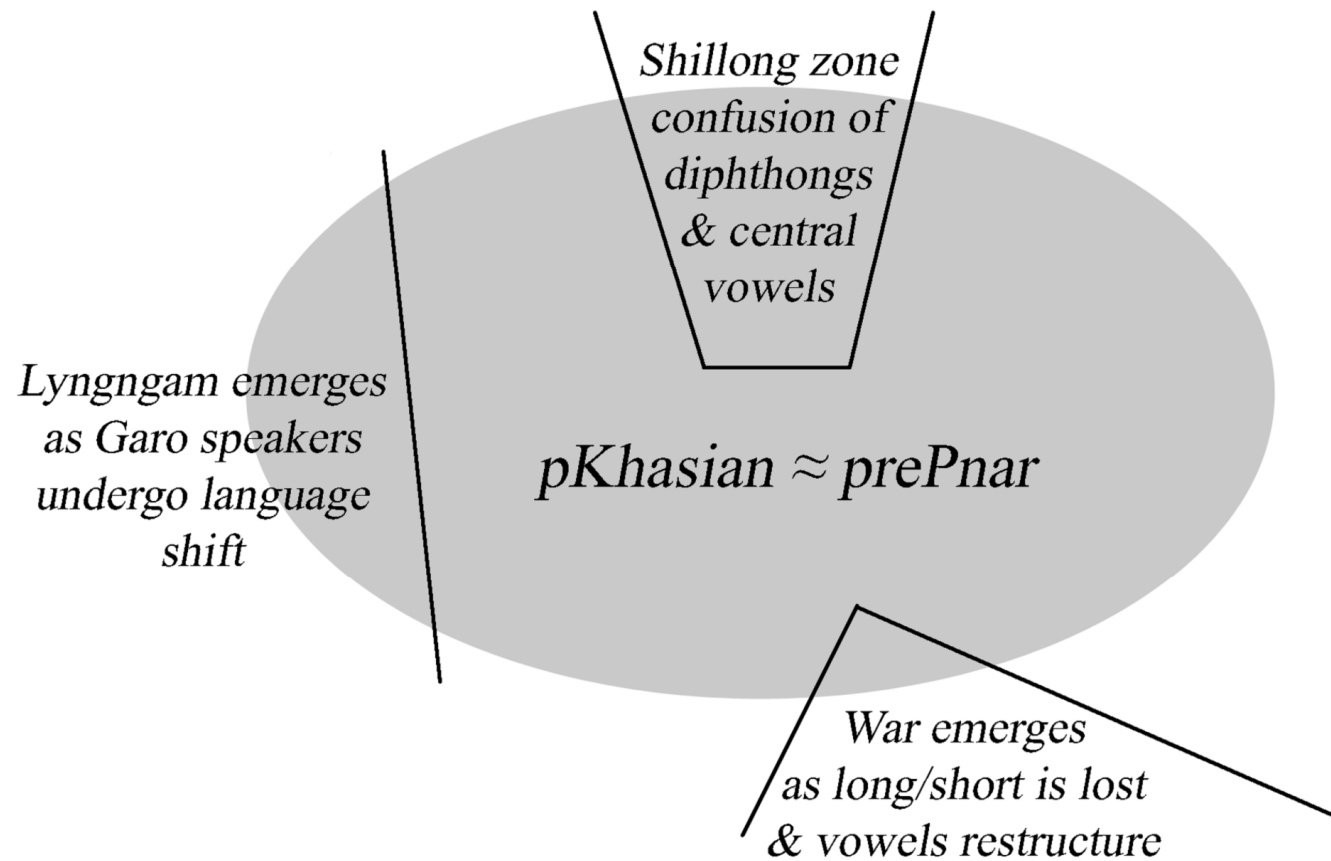
WrKhasi **ia**, **ie** have complex correspondences, mostly < from *əə, *εε, but I find no regular patterning

WrKhasi **e** < ə, ε, 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



Lexicostats: Sidwell (2009)

Can be interpreted as consistent with reconstruction

Lyngngam

63 Khasi (Shillong)

54 75 Pnar (Noksia)

41 55 57 War (Amlarem)

37 53 51 80 Amwi (Weidert)

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

- Hypotheses:
 - 3rd 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 (*e?/eh)

*əə, *ə

*oo (*o?)

*ɛ, *ia

*aa, *a

*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

Lexicon

	pPalaungic	pKhasian	
'two'	*ʔaar	*ʔaar	Khasi ʔar
'blood'	*snaam/saam	*snaam	Khasi snam
'fingernail'	*rnsiim	*tr ^h im	Khasi trsim
'hair' #1	*suuk	*c ^h uk	Amwi suʔ
'hair' #2	(Danaw ɲok)	*c ^h ɲok	Khasi ɲuʔ
'burn/roast'	*taŋ	*t ^h aŋ	Khasi thaŋ
'man/male'	*krmeʔ	--	Amwi trmɛ
'rain'	*sələʔ	*slap	Amwi slɛ
'swim'	*ŋɔj	*ɲi	Khasi ɲi
'water'	*ʔom	*ʔum	Khasi ʔum
'porcupine'	*rŋkəəs (Danaw kiɛt ^{1'3})	*dnk ^h ɛt	Khasi dəŋkiət

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: paʔaŋ

Hat/O'du: paj

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

Nicobarese, e.g. Nancowry ʔã, 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.