An Introduction to Tai Laing
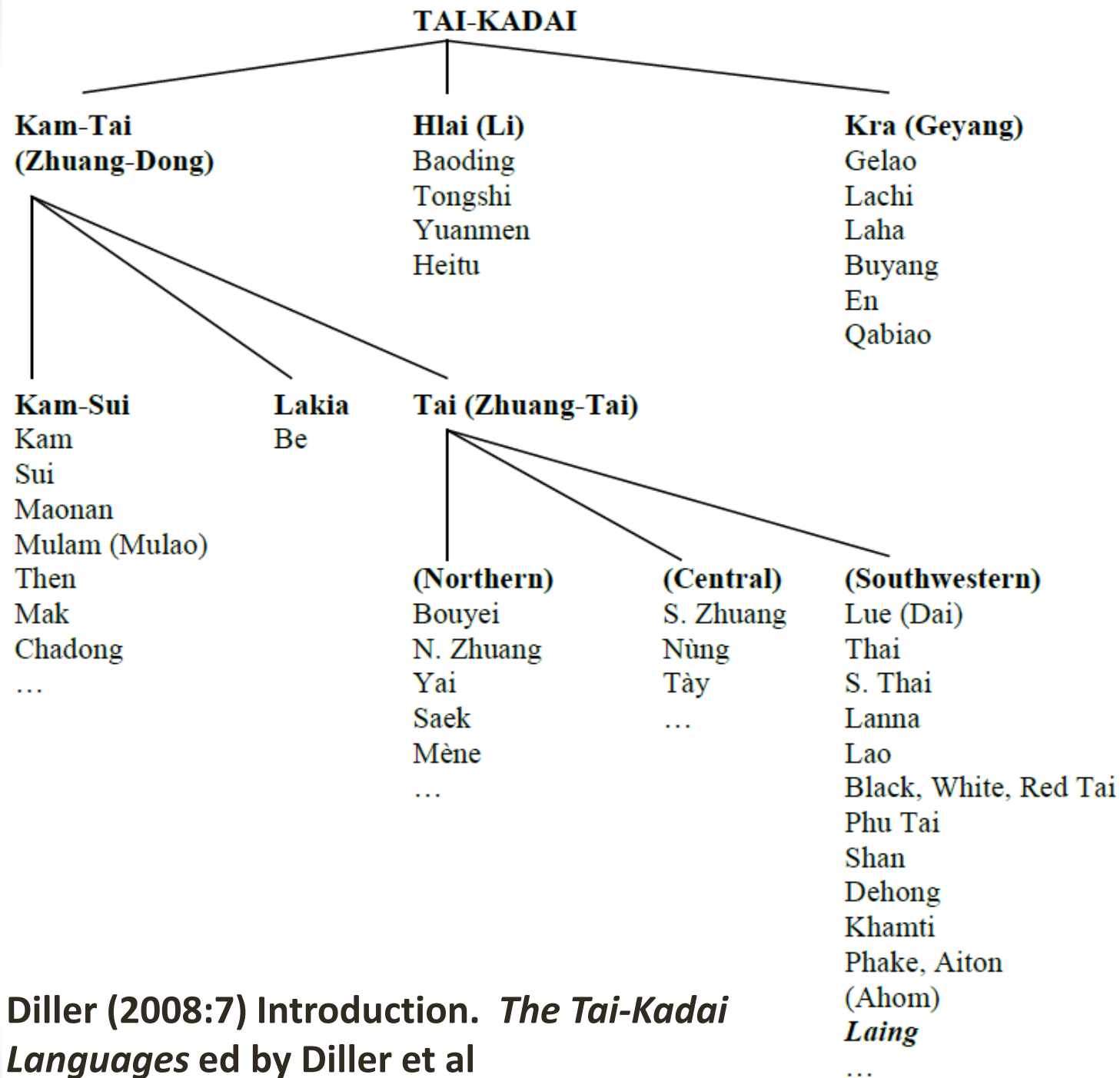
Phonology, Orthography and Sociolinguistic Context

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TAI-KADAI

Kam-Tai (Zhuang-Dong)

Hlai (Li)
Baoding
Tongshi
Yuanmen
Heitu

Kra (Geyang)
Gelao
Lachi
Laha
Buyang
En
Qabiao

Kam-Sui
Kam
Sui
Maonan
Mulam (Mulao)
Then
Mak
Chadong
…

Lakia
Be

Tai (Zhuang-Tai)

(Northern)
Bouyei
N. Zhuang
Yai
Saek
Mène
…

(Central)
S. Zhuang
Nùng
Tày
…

(Southwestern)
Lue (Dai)
Thai
S. Thai
Lanna
Lao
Black, White, Red Tai
Phu Tai
Shan
Dehong
Khamti
Phake, Aiton
(Ahom)
Laing
…

Diller (2008:7) Introduction. *The Tai-Kadai Languages* **ed by Diller et al**

Previous References

- Edmondson (2008) classed Tai Laing as 'Northern Shan'

- Hosken (2011) had script accepted into Unicode Standard

- Sai Kam Mong (2004) mentioned that Tai Leng script developed from Lik Hto Ngouk, the script used in Dehong
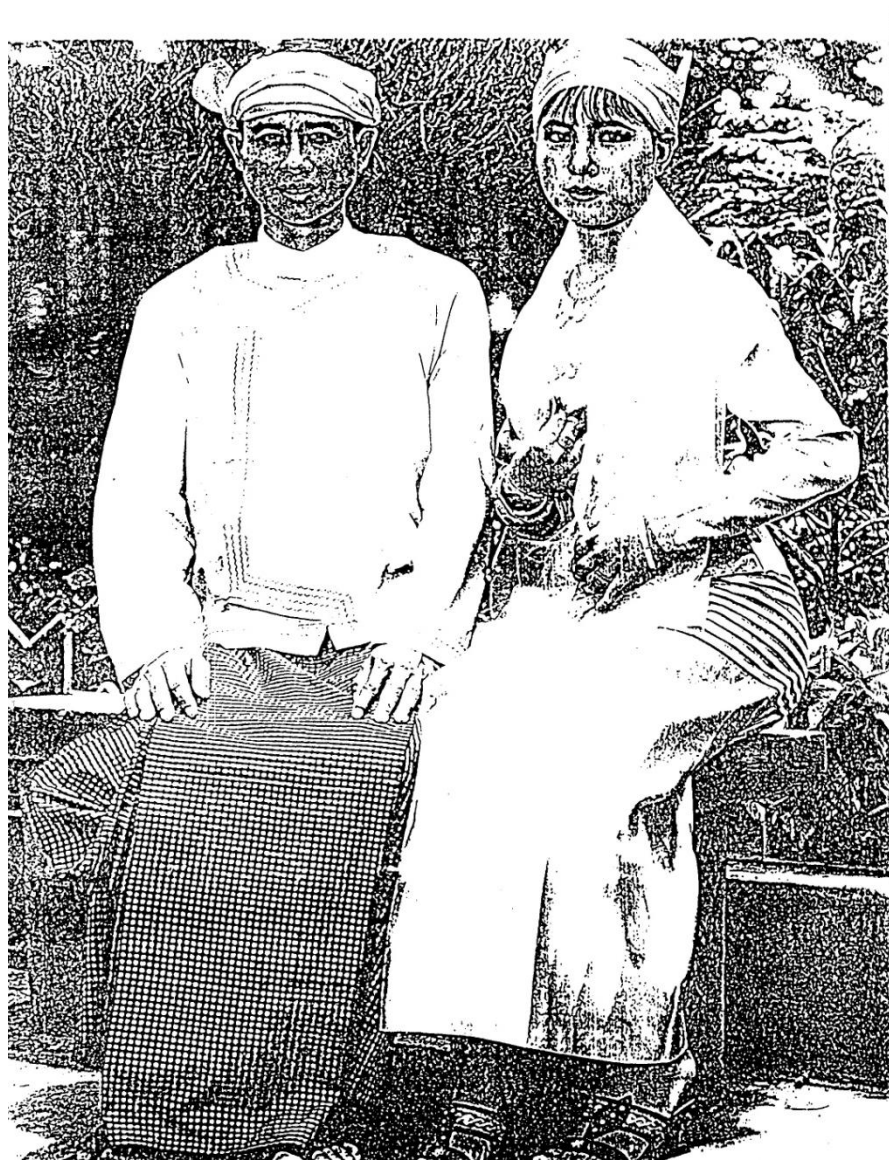
Image from 'Tai Peoples of Kachin State'

Ethnic Groups in Kachin State

Tai Groups	'Kachin' Groups (Tibeto-Burman)
Tai Laing	**Jingpho**
Tai Khamti	Rawang
Tai Le (Tai Nuea)	Lachid
Tai Lay	Lhaovo
'Tai Sa' (Achang)	Zaiwa
	Lisu

Endangerment Status (EGIDS)

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

SIL Ethnologue 'Language Cloud'
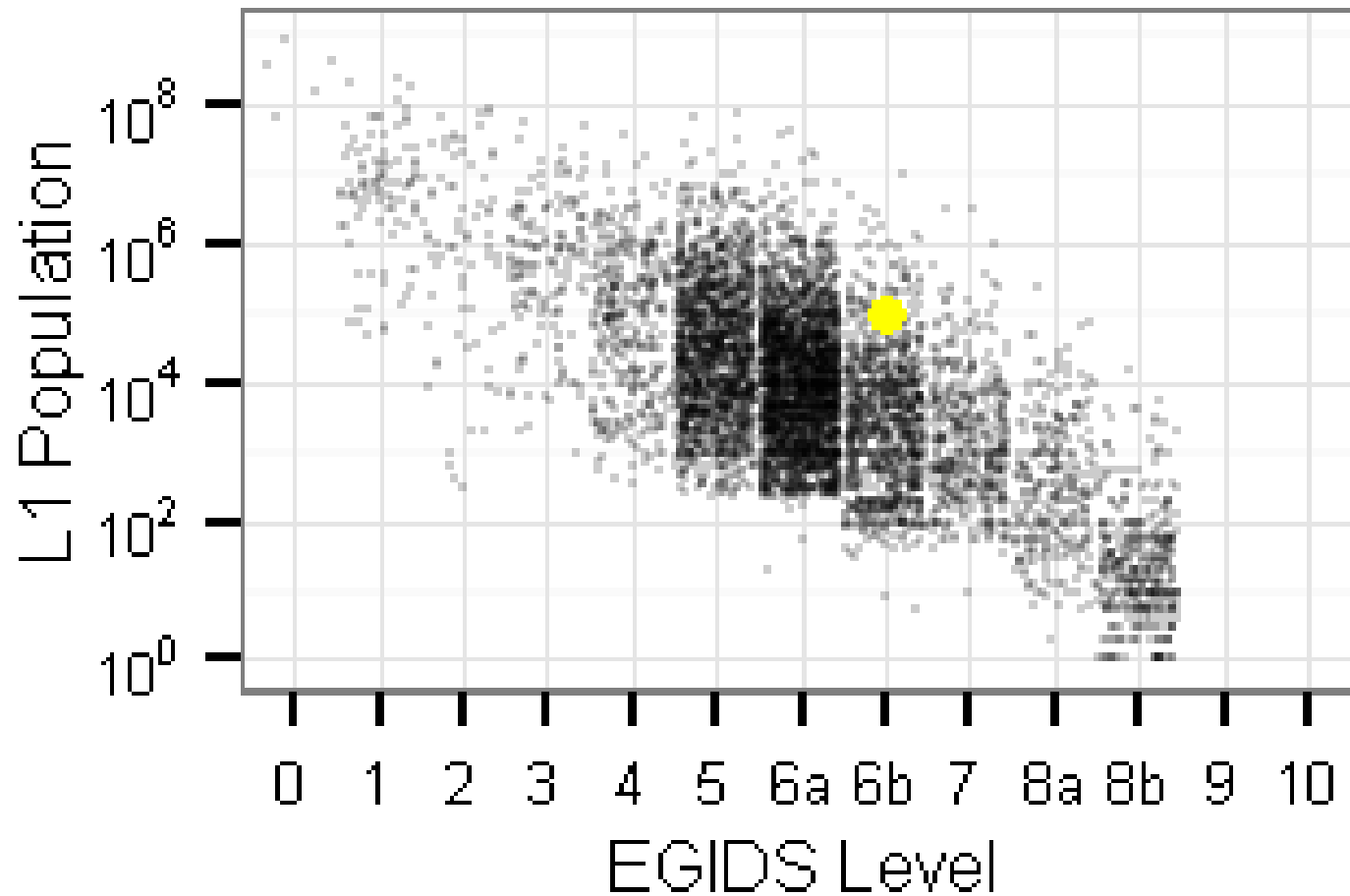
Tai Laing Primer
Beginners' Level

Data

- 2 speakers

- Recorded tone wordlist (160 items)

- Recorded general Tai wordlist

- Written 400-item wordlist

Syllable structure
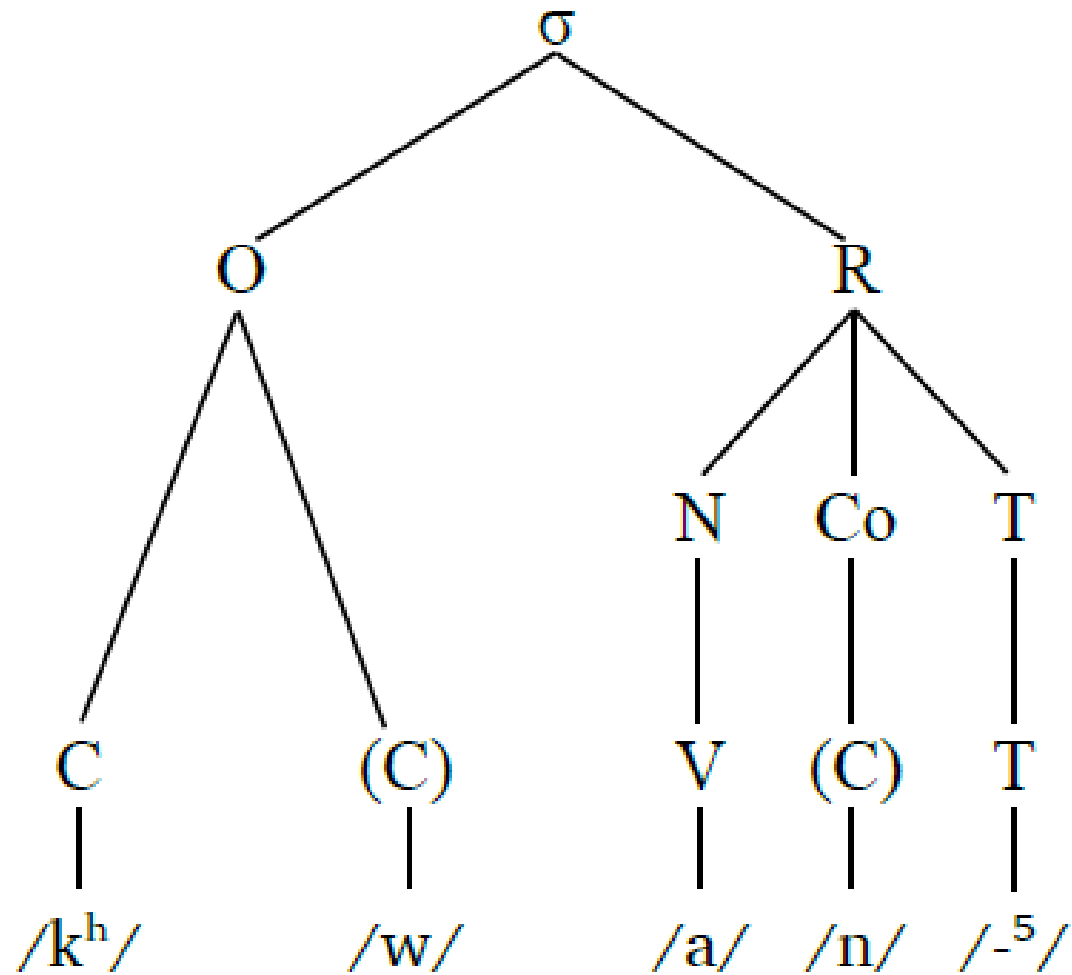
19 Initial Consonant Phones

	Labial	Alveolar	Alv-palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p	t	tɕ/ɕ	k	ʔ
	pʰ	tʰ	tɕʰ/ɕʰ	kʰ	
Affricate		ts			
Nasal	m	n		ŋ	
Fricative	f	s			h
Approximant			j	w	
Lateral approximant		l			

2 Allophones

- tɕ is in complementary distribution with k
  - Derives from PSWT˙ *ki
  - The t is not always pronounced leaving the fricative ɕ
- tɕʰ is in complementary distribution with kʰ
  - Derives from PSWT˙ *kʰi or *gi
  - The t is not always pronounced leaving the fricative ɕʰ

19 Initial Consonant Graphs

	Voiceless unasp. Plosive		Voiceless asp. Plosive		Nasal	
Velar	�‌ၒ	k	ၐ	k^h	C	ŋ
'Palatal'	ၷ	ts	ဃ	s	ၹ	ɲ
Alveolar	ၰ	t	ၶ	t^h	ၵ	n
Labial	ၓ	p	ၷၻ	p^h		
			ၿ	f	ၽ	m
	ၸ	j	ၯ	r	ၬ	l
	ၒ	w	ၹ	h	ၶ	ʔ

2 Graphs not used as Initials

- Palatal nasal ည used only as a final /j/ in rhymes /uj oj ɯj ɤj/
- Alveolar trill ြ used only as second element in initial clusters /pʰr pr tr sr/
- There are graphs for both /f/ and /pʰ/. Words realised with initial [f] derive from *v, eg *va 'sky'

Consonants (incl. those for Pali)

	Vl unasp	Vl asp	Vd unasp	Vd asp	Nasal
Velar	k	kʰ	g	gʱ	ŋ
'Palatal'	ts	s	ɟ	ɟʱ	ɲ
'Retroflex'	t	tʰ	ɖ	ɖʱ	ɳ
Alveolar	t	tʰ	d	dʱ	n
Labial	p	pʰ	b	bʱ	
		f			m
'Non-group' consonants	j	ɾ	l	l	w
	s	h	ʔ		

Initial Clusters

	ျ -j	ြ -r	ြ -w
က k	ကျ tɕ		ကြ kw
ခ kʰ	ချ tɕʰ		ခြ kʰw
တ t		တြ tr	
ပ p	ပျ pj	ပြ pr	
ဖ pʰ	ဖျ pʰj	ဖြ pʰr	
မ m	မျ mj		
သ s		သြ sr	

Gedney Tone Box Framework

		PT Tones				
		A	**B**	**C**	**DS**	**DL**
	Voiceless friction sounds **s, *hm, *ph* etc.	A1	B1	C1	DS1	DL1
Initials at time of tone splits	**Voiceless unaspirated stops** **p, *t, *k*, etc.	A2	B2	C2	DS2	DL2
	Glottalised sounds **ʔ, *ʔb, *ʔd*, etc.	A3	B3	C3	DS3	DL3
	Voiced sounds **b, *m, *l*, etc.	A4	B4	C4	DS4	DL4
		Live syllables			**Dead syllables**	

6 Tones in Live Syllables

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	ကာ ka:³⁵	ကာ ka:³³	ကၘ ka:²¹ʔ	ကတ် kat³³	ကာတ် ka:t³³
2					
3	ကာ̱ ka:³¹				
4	ကာ̰း ka:⁴⁴²		ကာ̰း ka:⁵³ʔ	ကပ်̰ kap⁵³ʔ	ကာပ်̰ ka:p⁵³ʔ

Edmondson's Northern Shan

	A	B	C	DS	DL
1	ka:^{35}	ka:^{11}	ka:$^{31?}$	Kat^{35}	ka:t^{21}
2	ka:^{33}				
3					
4	ka:^{55}		ka:$^{53?}$	kap^{53}	ka:p^{53}

- Tone splits the same
- DS123 associated with A1 whereas in my Laing Data DS123 associated with B1

10 Simple Vowels; 1 Diphthong

	Front Unrounded		Central Unrounded		Back Unrounded		Back Rounded	
	Phonemic	Phonetic	Phonemic	Phonetic	Phonemic	Phonetic	Phonemic	Phonetic
Close	/i/	[i] [iː]			/ɯ/	[ɯ] [ɯː]	/u/	[u] [uː]
Close-Mid	/e/	[e] [eː]			/ɤ/	[ɤ] [ɤː]	/o/	[o] [oː]
Open-Mid	/ɛ/	[ɛ] [ɛː],[ai]					/ɔ/	[ɔ] [ɔː]
Open			/a/	/a/				
			/aː/	[aː]				
			/aɯ/	[aɯ]				

Why Tai Laing?

- Proto-Tai 'red' *ʔdl/riɛŋ
- Modern reflexes
  - laⁱŋ in Kachin State
  - naⁱŋ in Sagaing Division
  - *iɛ →ɛ →ai (Edmondson)
- *ɛ is realised as ɛ
  - eg 'insect' *mɛŋ → mɛŋ

Vowel Graphs

	Front Unrounded		Central Unrounded		Back Unrounded		Back Rounded	
	Open	**Closed**	**Open**	**Closed**	**Open**	**Closed**	**Open**	**Closed**
Close	တီ /ti/	တိတ် /tit/			တိုၟ် /tɯ/	တိုတ် /tɯt/	တု /tu/	တုတ် /tut/
Close-Mid	တေ /te/	တိတ် /tet/			တိုၟ် /tɤ/	တိုတ် /tɤt/	တုၟ် /to/	တုတ် /tot/
Open-Mid	တော် /tɛ/	တ်တ် /tɛt/					တော /tɔ/	တွတ် /tɔt/
Open				တတ /tat/				
			တာ /taː/	တာတ /taːt/				
			တၟ် /taɯ/					

Rimes

	-	-p	-t	-k	-ʔ	-m	-n	-ŋ	-j	-w
-i	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
-e	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
-ɛ	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
-a	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
-aː	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
-aɯ	✓									
-ɯ	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
-ɤ	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
-u	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
-o	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
-ɔ	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

	-	-p	-t	-k	-m	-n	-ŋ	-j	-w
-i	တီ	တိပ်	တိတ်	တိက်	တိမ်	တိန်ဲ	တိင်		တိဝ်
-e	တေ	တိပ်	တိတ်	တိက်	တိမ်	တိန်ဲ	တိင်		တိဝ်
-ɛ	တေႝ	တပ်	တတ်	တက်	တမ်	တန်ဲ	တင်		တဝ်
-a	တ	တပ်	တတ်	တက်	တမ်	တန်ဲ	တင်	တံ	တဝ်
-aː	တာ	တာပ်	တာတ်	တာက်	တာမ်	တာန်ဲ	တာင်	တာ့	တာဝ်
-aɯ	တုဲ								
-ɯ	တိုဝ်	တိုပ်	တိုတ်	တိုက်	တိုမ်	တိုန်ဲ	တိုင်	တိုႃ	
-ɤ	တိုဝ်	တိုပ်	တိုတ်	တိက်	တိုမ်	တိုန်ဲ	တိုင်	တိုႃ	
-u	တု	တုပ်	တုတ်	တုက်	တုမ်	တုန်ဲ	တုင်	တုႃ	
-o	တုဝ်	တုပ်	တုတ်	တုက်	တုမ်	တုန်ဲ	တုင်	တုႃ	
-ɔ	တော	တွပ်	တွတ်	တွက်	တွမ်	တွန်ဲ	တွင်	တွံ	

Further Research

- Why is medial j used with initials non-velar stops?
- Is glottal stop used as a final consonant?