

# Karenic as a Branch of Tibeto-Burman: More Evidence from Proto-Karen



Sgaw



Pwo



Pa-O



Kayah



Kayan



Kayaw

**Theraphan Luangthongkum**

Department of Linguistics

Faculty of Arts

Chulalongkorn University

Bangkok, Thailand

[theraphan.l@chula.ac.th](mailto:theraphan.l@chula.ac.th)

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# Background (1)

## • Eighteen Karenic Groups in Myanmar (Ethnologue, 2009)

Pa-O	Brek	Paku
Lahta	E. Kayah	Sgaw
Kayan	W. Kayah	Wewaw
Bwe	Yinbaw	Zeyein
Geko	Yintale	E. Pwo
Geba	Manumanaw	W. Pwo

## • Six Karenic Groups in Thailand

Pa-O	Kayaw	Kayan
Sgaw	Kayah	Pwo

## Map of Settlements of Karen Subgroups in the North and the West of Thailand

**THE KAREN** are the largest of all of the ethnic groups in Thailand. Their settlements are found in the high lands of the provinces located along the Thai-Burmese border in the North and the West of Thailand. Each Karen ethnic group has its own language identity, way of life, clothing style, tradition and culture, which are totally different from those of the Thais living on the plains.

The Karen Linguistics project had sent out questionnaires to the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) and other segments which might have relevant information three times to complete the survey and compile information to make a map of the settlements of the 6 subgroups of the Karen, at village level, from 2011 to 2012. This covered 15 provinces—Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Tak, Sukhothai, Kamphaeng Phet, Kanchanaburi, Uthai Thani, Suphan Buri, Ratchaburi, Phetchaburi and Prachuap Khiri Khan.

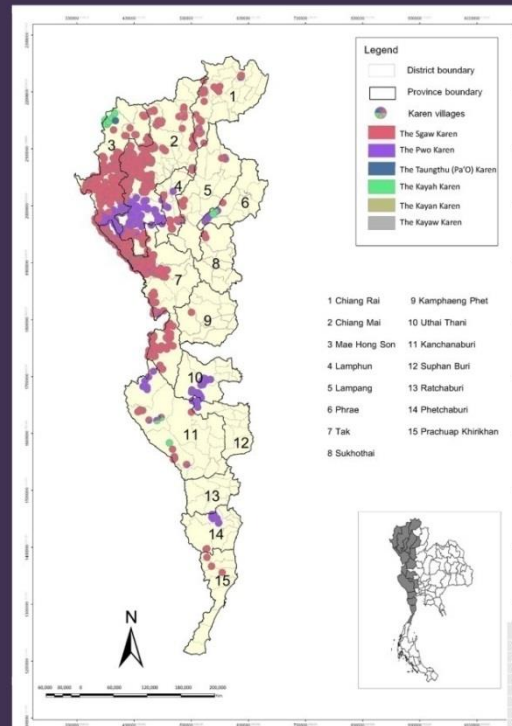
Note: 66% of the answers from the subdistricts covered by the survey shows that there was no information from Ratchaburi Province and the Kayan and the Kayaw subgroups were not found there.

The Karen in Thailand can be divided into 6 subgroups

- The Sgaw Karen
- The Pwo Karen
- The Taungthu (Pa'O) Karen
- The Kayah Karen (the Red Karen)
- The Kayan Karen (the Long Necked Karen)
- The Kayaw Karen (the Large Ear-lobed Karen)



Map of Settlements of Karen Subgroups at village level (in 2012)



Map of Settlements of Karen Subgroups classified by province (in 2012)

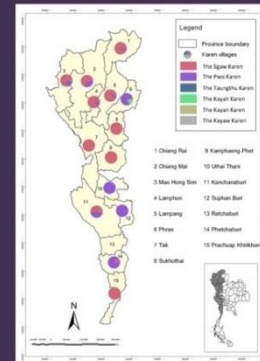


Table of the Number of Karen Subgroups Classified by Province

No.	Province <sup>1</sup>	Number of villages	The Karen Subgroups					
			Sgaw	Pwo	Taungthu	Kayah	Kayan	Kayaw
1	Chiang Rai	52	5,833	2,108	6,430	0	0	0
2	Mae Hong Son	354	73,650	92,160	63,616	18,751	200	2,001
3	Chiang Mai	442	92,716	98,100	85,610	30,141	0	0
4	Lamphun	26	13,889	16,276	13,512	2,654	0	0
5	Lampang	11	2,684	3,313	2,036	200	0	0
6	Phrae	16	6,356	6,158	519	6,276	0	1,363
7	Tak	306	73,774	65,472	91,694	2,754	0	0
8	Sukhothai	2	761	966	986	0	0	0
9	Kamphaeng Phet	2	275	495	275	0	0	0
10	Uthai Thani	24	5,362	3,284	0	3,284	0	0
11	Kanchanaburi	20	6,416	6,531	4,537	3,797	40	220
12	Suphan Buri	6	903	1,004	0	1,004	0	0
13	Ratchaburi	-	3,338	1,708	0	2,062	-	-
14	Phetchaburi	30	1,278	2,021	2,521	0	0	0
15	Prachuap Khiri Khan	51	1,278	2,021	2,521	0	0	0
	Total	1,261	285,964	352,734	242,411	72,627	368	3,863

### The Karen Linguistics Project

Data source: Questionnaire collection received from the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO) (2011-2012)

Sponsored by: the Thailand Research Fund (TRF)

Map produced by: Asst. Prof. Sirivilai Teerarajanarat (Ph.D.)

Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University

Research project director: Prof. Theraphan Luangthongkum (Ph.D.)

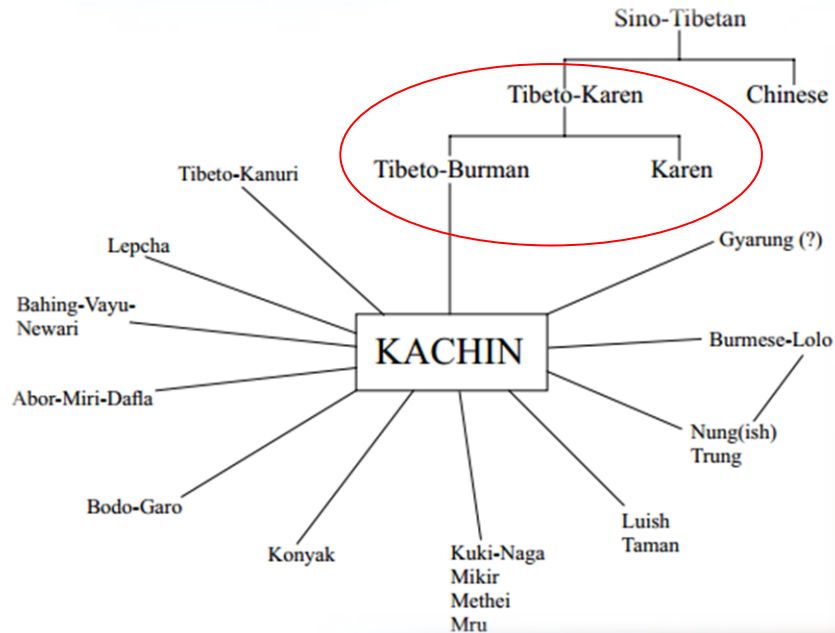
Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University

Remarks:  
 1. Data source: Documents from the Department of Social Development and Welfare, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Thailand (2002).  
 2. Data source: Questionnaire collection from the Subdistrict Administrative Organization (SAO), Thailand in 2011-2012.  
 3. Warning: The information on the size of the Karen population was compiled from villages/sub-districts that had responded to the questionnaires. The total number at the provincial level is therefore lower than the true number in reality.

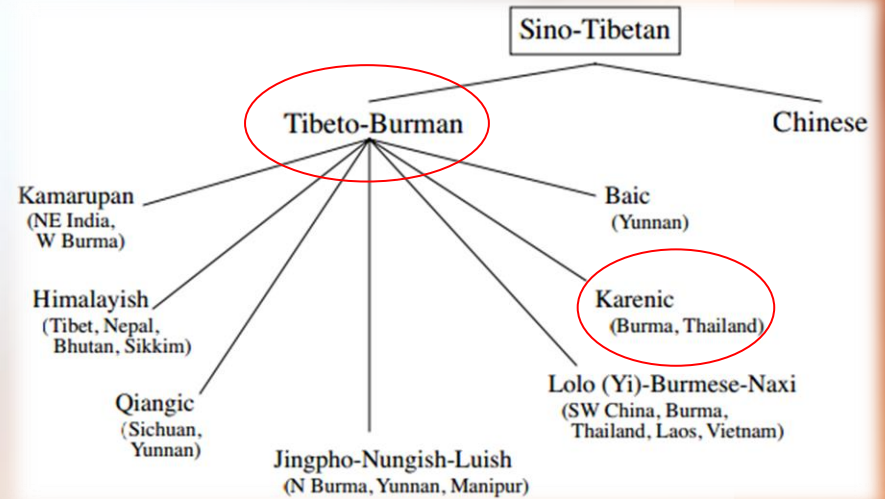
# Background (2)

- Genetic relationship

A



B



# Evidence 1: Retention of the PTB low central vowel \*a in PK

- PTB \*pa > PK \*pha<sup>A</sup> ‘male, father’
- PTB \*ka > PK \*kha<sup>B</sup> ‘bitter’
- PTB \*tsa > PK \*sa<sup>B</sup> ‘salt’
- PTB \*ɲya > PK \*hɲa<sup>B</sup> ‘flesh, meat’
- PTB \*b-wa > PK \*ʔbwa<sup>A</sup> ‘white’
- PTB \*g/m/b-la-y > PK \*ʔbla<sup>B</sup> ‘arrow’

## **Evidence 2: Retention of the PTB final nasals \*-m \*-n \*-ŋ in PK**

- PTB \*mi:n > PK \*min<sup>A</sup> ‘name’
- PTB \*ʔam > PK \*ʔam<sup>B</sup> ‘drink’
- PTB \*s-min > PK \*hmin<sup>A</sup> ‘ripe, cooked’
- PTB \*r-kaŋ > PK \*khaŋ<sup>B</sup> ‘leg’
- PTB \*kaŋ > PK \*gaŋ<sup>A</sup> ‘spider’
- PTB \*g-laŋ > PK \*hlaŋ<sup>A/B</sup> ‘hawk, vulture’
- PTB \*s-luŋ > PK \*hloŋ<sup>B</sup> ‘maggot’

# **Evidence 3: PTB \*voiced initials > PK \*voiceless or \*glottalised initials**

- PTB \*mey > PK \*hme<sup>B</sup> ‘fire’
- PTB \*mi > PK \*hmi<sup>B</sup> ‘female, woman’
- PTB \*g-lan > PK \*hlan<sup>A/B</sup> ‘hawk’
- PTB \*lap > PK \*hla<sup>B</sup> ‘leaf’
- PTB \*b-wa > PK \*ʔbwa<sup>A</sup> ‘white’
- PTB \*dwəy > PK \*ʔdej<sup>B</sup> ‘egg’

# **Evidence 4: PTB prefix \*s- followed by a stem with \*voiced sonorant > PK \*voiceless initials**

- PTB \*s-min > PK \*hmin<sup>A</sup> ‘ripe, cooked’
- PTB \*s-mwəy > PK \*hmej<sup>A</sup> ‘sleep’
- PTB \*s-luŋ > PK \*hloŋ<sup>B</sup> ‘maggot’
- PTB \*s-ni(:)ŋ > PK \*hneŋ<sup>B</sup> ‘year’
- PTB \*s-lay > PK \*hlaj<sup>B</sup> ‘lick’
- PTB \*s-leŋ > PK \*hli<sup>B</sup> ‘squirrel’

# **Evidence 5: PTB \*voiceless unaspirated stop initials > PK \*voiceless aspirated stop initials**

- PTB \*pa > PK \*pha<sup>A</sup> ‘male, father’
- PTB \*tak > PK \*tha<sup>B</sup> ‘weave (cloth)’
- PTB \*kroy > PK \*khlo<sup>B</sup> ‘snail’
- PTB \*s-ton > PK \*g-thoN<sup>A</sup> ‘thousand’
- PTB \*s-kew > PK \*khwi<sup>A</sup> ‘nine’
- PTB \*d-kruk > PK \*khrow<sup>A</sup> ‘six’



## **Evidence 6: PTB voiced rhotic \*-r > PK \*- ∅**

- PTB \*s-kar > PK \*cha<sup>B</sup> ‘star’
- PTB \*swa:r > PK \*chja<sup>B</sup> ‘sour’
- PTB \*s(y)ar > PK \*gra<sup>B</sup> ‘insect’

## **Evidence 7: PTB \*voiceless alveolar fricative \*-s > PK \*voiceless alveolar stop \*-t**

- PTB \*was > PK \*kwat<sup>D</sup> ‘bee (Apis cerana)’
- PTB \*rus > PK \*khrwit<sup>D</sup> ‘bone’
- PTB \*s-nis > PK \*ʔnwet<sup>D</sup> ‘seven’

# **Evidence 8: PTB \*voiceless stop finals have remained \*voiceless stop or have become glottal stop \*-ʔ in PK**

- PTB \*nuk > PK \*nok<sup>D</sup> ‘brain’
- PTB \*b-r-gyat ≠ \*b-g-ryat > PK \*khr/grət<sup>D</sup> ‘eight’
- PTB \*ʔap ≠ \*ga:p > PK \*khaʔ<sup>D</sup> ‘shoot (v.)’
- PTB \*ma:k > PK \*maʔ<sup>D</sup> ‘son-in-law’
- PTB \*m-sak > PK \*saʔ<sup>D</sup> ‘itchy’
- PTB \*dyuk > PK \*t-khroʔ<sup>D</sup> ‘sambha deer’
- PTB \*k-r-pwat > PK \*s-waʔ<sup>D</sup> ‘land leech’

## **Evidence 9: PTB high back vowel \*u and \*u: > PK mid back vowel \*o**

- PTB \*nuk > PK \*nok<sup>D</sup> ‘brain’
- PTB \*ruŋ > PK \*noŋ<sup>A</sup> ‘horn’
- PTB \*r-luŋ > PK \*loŋ<sup>B</sup> ‘stone’
- PTB \*d-kruk > PK \*khrow<sup>A</sup> ‘six’
- PTB \*s-luŋ > PK \*hloŋ<sup>B</sup> ‘maggot’
- PTB \*b-yuw > PK \*jow<sup>B</sup> ‘mouse, rat’
- PTB \*b-ru:l > PK \*row<sup>B</sup> ‘snake’

# **Evidence 10: PTB off-gliding rhyme \*-iy > PK monophthong \*-i**

- PTB \*bwiy > PK \*wi<sup>A</sup> ‘bamboo rat’
- PTB \*kwiy > PK \*thwi<sup>B</sup> ‘dog’
- PTB \*s-hwiy > PK \*swi<sup>B</sup> ‘blood’
- PTB \*s/g-liy > PK \*kli<sup>A</sup> ‘flea’
- PTB \*r-miy > PK \*rwi<sup>B</sup> ‘root’

# **Evidence 11: PTB off-gliding rhyme \*-ey > PK monophthong \*-e**

- PTB \*mey > PK \*hme<sup>B</sup> 'fire'
- PTB \*rey > PK \*re<sup>B</sup> 'rattan'
- PTB \*b-rey > PK \*bre<sup>A</sup> 'buy'
- PTB \*d-key > PK \*khe<sup>A</sup> 'tiger'
- PTB \*r-ney-t > PK \*ne<sup>B</sup> 'get, obtain'

# **Evidence 12: PTB off-gliding rhymes \*-ay and \*-a:y > PK monophthong \*-e**

- PTB \*s/m-lay > PK \*ble<sup>A</sup> ‘tongue’
- PTB \*r-may > PK \*me<sup>B</sup> ‘tail’
- PTB \*pwa:y > PK \*phe<sup>A</sup> ‘bran, chaff’

# **Evidence 13: PTB off-gliding rhyme \*-əy > PK off-gliding rhyme \*-ej(ey)**

- PTB \*nəy > PK \*nej<sup>A</sup> ‘sun, day’
- PTB \*b-ləy > PK \*lej<sup>A</sup> ‘grandchild’
- PTB \*d-kəy > PK \*d-khej<sup>A</sup> ‘barking deer’
- PTB \*d-ləy > PK \*klej<sup>B</sup> ‘crossbow’
- PTB \*twəy ✕ \*dwəy > PK \*ʔdej<sup>B</sup> ‘egg’

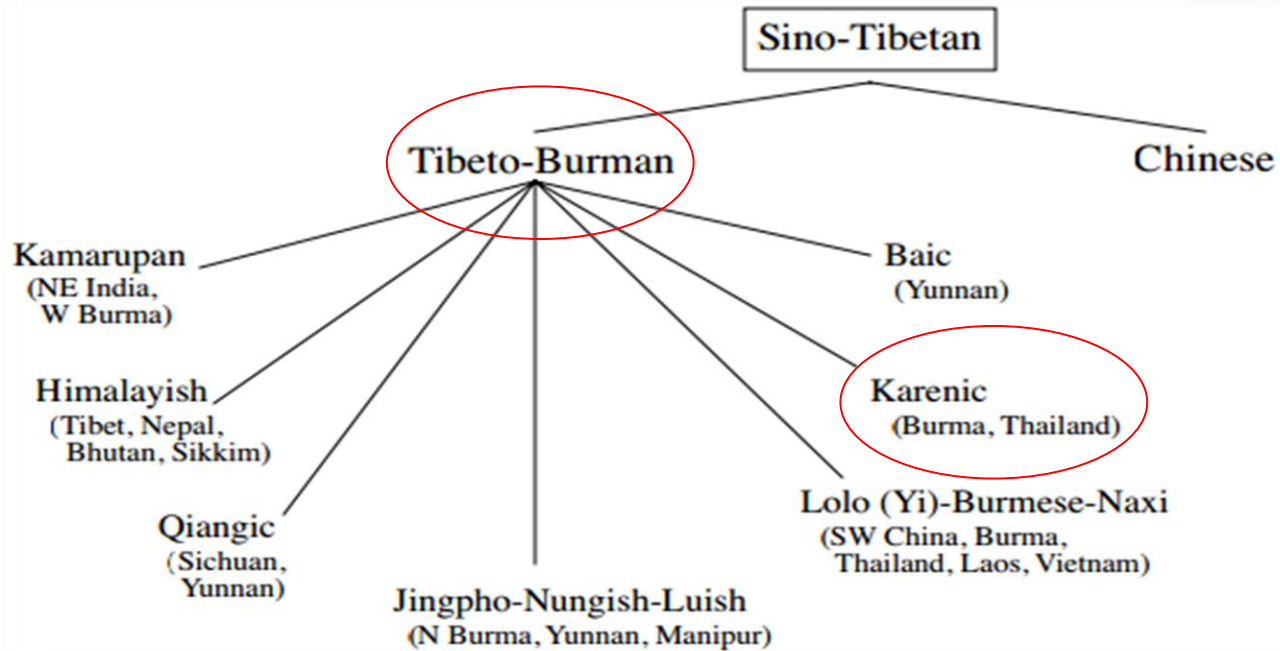


# Evidence 14: PTB \*prefix-stem and/or \*-infix-stem > PK \*CC-

- PTB \*b-wa > PK \*ʔbwa<sup>A</sup> 'white'
- PTB \*b-rey > PK \*bre<sup>A</sup> 'buy'
- PTB \*s-hwiy > PK \*swi<sup>B</sup> 'blood'
- PTB \*g/b/m-la-y > PK \*bla<sup>B</sup> 'arrow'
- PTB \*s-hywəy, \*s-hwiy > PK \*swi<sup>B</sup> 'blood'
- PTB \*b-r-gyat ≠ \*b-g-ryat > PK \*grət<sup>D</sup> 'eight'

# Conclusion

- Karenic should be classified as a branch of Tibeto-Burman.



# **Discussion (1)**

- **Genetic relationships can become less and less clear due to cultural and language contact.**
- **It would be very interesting if we could find cognates and compare them at the proto level, e.g. Proto-Karen with Proto-Lolo(Yi)-Burmese-Naxi, Proto-Karen with Proto-Nungish-Luish and so forth.**
- **A comparison between Proto-Karen and Old Chinese focusing on the Karen innovations will be interesting too.**

## **Discussion (2)**

- **More information on Central Karen languages spoken in Myanmar is needed.**
- **Academic co-operation and collaboration between specialists of Southeast Asian languages and linguists should be encouraged by the authorities of ASEAN countries, especially Myanmar and Thailand.**

# **Acknowledgements**

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# Thank you

