

NOTES AND COMMENTS

A POINT OF CORRECTION

A review of our *Comparative Kadai* by James R. Chamberlain (*Journal of the Siam Society* 77.2, 89-90) contains a statement that we feel requires comment. Our concern is not to reply to the matters of interpretation, emphasis or taste on which we differ, as is inevitable in any but the most adulatory review (as for example the matter of the scope of the term *kadai*, which has for some 15 years now been used by a number of writers — including its coiner, Paul Benedict — as in the title of our volume: to designate the higher-level grouping including Tai, Kam-Sui, and Li ((Hlai)), Gelao, Lati and others; see Benedict 1975, xvi, 135 et seq). Rather we seek to correct a factual inaccuracy that, if not unambiguously asserted by Chamberlain, is at least the most obvious interpretation of one of his sentences. We feel that this inaccuracy requires comment for two reasons, the more important being that it may create serious difficulties for readers in understanding our notation of the tonal categories of Tai and Kam-Sui (already a difficult area). A second reason is that Chamberlain seems to find our tonal notation not merely confusing, but offensive; at least if we are to be guided by his choice of words ('reeks of Chinese chauvinism,' 'violates the integrity,' 'perpetrated their own miniature cultural revolution,' etc.) We therefore hope to clarify matters to readers who might otherwise share Chamberlain's reaction.

The point in question is the following:

In a perverse rearrangement of the Proto-Tai tonal categories from ABC to ACB, the editors have sought to place the Tai and Kam-Sui languages into the Chinese frame of reference rather than that of Tai. (Chamberlain, p. 90)

As background to the ensuing discussion, readers should keep in mind the following:

1. Proto-Tai had three tones in syllables ending with sonorants or vowels (syllables with final stops had no tonal contrast).
2. In modern Thai script the descendants of these three tones are signaled by the tone marks *ไม้เอก* /máj èek/, *ไม้โท* /máj thoo/, and zero tone mark.
3. The names of the two tone marks have meanings which may be rendered as 'primary mark' and 'secondary mark,' suggesting the ordering zero-1-2 which is followed, for example, in Thai dictionaries. The same ordering was followed by Li Fang-kuei when he used the letters A B C to label the proto-Tai tone categories. That is,

(1) Thai script	proto-Tai category
zero	A
máj èek (ไม้เอก)	B
máj thoo (ไม้โท)	C

Now, the statement by Chamberlain quoted above could easily be taken to mean that Edmondson & Solnit have reversed the assignment of the labels B and C, producing the following correspondences:

(2) modern Thai reflex	proto-Tai category
zero (no tone mark)	A
máj èek (ไม้เอก)	C
máj thoo (ไม้โท)	B

But this is not the case, as can be seen by considering the following table, reproduced from Edmondson & Solnit 1988 (Introduction, p. 8):

(3) proto-Kam-Sui	A	C	B	D(short)	D(long)
modern Kam-Sui					
voiceless, glottalized	1	3	5	7	9
aspirated (if distinct)	1'	3'	5'	7'	9'
voiced	2	4	6	8	10
proto-Tai	A	C	B	d(short)	D(long)
Chinese	<i>ping</i>	<i>shang</i>	<i>qu</i>	<i>ru</i>	<i>ru</i>

As explained in our Introduction (9), the Tai tone category corresponding to Chinese *shang* is the /máj thoo/category, which we follow Li Fang-kuei in calling Tone C. So the system used in Edmondson & Solnit 1988 is actually as in (1) above, with B=/máj èek/ and C=/máj thoo/. That is, we have not 'violate[d] the long-established and accepted tradition set up by Li Fang Kuei' (Chamberlain, 90); rather we follow it precisely.

Chamberlain's actual words leave some room for uncertainty as to what specifically he objects to. One possibility is that he has simply misunderstood Table (3) and the accompanying explanation. If so, we trust that all cause for offence has been removed by our reiterating that we do follow Li Fang-kuei's ABC. We would add that, if Chamberlain has indeed misunderstood us, he is not to be blamed overmuch. The whole thing is confusing and annoying even for specialists, and the confusion is compounded in the case of our volume by the fact that one paper, by Paul Benedict (as stated in our Introduction, Edmondson & Solnit p. 9, table 7), does use the ABC designations as in (2) above, with the labels B and C reversed in relation to the proto-Tai categories. We nevertheless take it as criticism if we have failed to make things clear to one with Chamberlain's undoubted expertise in the Tai field.

A second possibility is that Chamberlain did understand that our B corresponds to *máj èek* and C to *máj thoo*, and that his objection is simply to the left-to-right ordering of the letters as displayed in (3). If so, we need only affirm that

we intended nothing of significance by the left-right ordering, being interested in neither a Tai nor a Chinese 'frame of reference', but only one with a one-to-one relation between symbol and referent. We offer the following revision of (3) (abridged, and this time including also the Thai-script tone-mark names):

(4) proto-Kam-Sui	A	B	C	Ds	D1
modern Kam-Sui	1	5	3	7	9
	2	6	4	8	10
proto-Tai	A	B	C	Ds	D1
Tai orthography	zero	èek	thoo	zero	zero
Chinese	ping	qu	shang	ru	ru

We would be happy to consider further rearrangements, such as starting with D on the left, or putting the 'proto-Tai' row at the top, if they have any proponents.

We can conceive of a third possibility regarding the content of Chamberlain's statement, namely that, although he did understand that our B corresponds to máj èek and C to máj thoo, he objects to the labeling of the *modern* Kam-Sui tone categories: B > 5/6 and C > 3/4. But this seems quite unlikely, since Chamberlain's actual words (cited above) refer to 'the Proto-Tai tonal categories...ABC'. The unfortunate but (in our judgment) inevitable discrepancy between the natural ordering of the proto-tones ABCD and that of the modern tones 123456 is discussed in our Introduction (p. 9).

We hope that this note has spared readers at least some confusion. To give pride of place to the main point we wish to communicate: for both proto-Tai and proto-Kam-Sui, our B is Li Fang-kuei's B is ໄ໊໊໊ máj èek; our C is Li Fang-kuei's C is ໄ໊໊໊ máj thoo.

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REVIEWER'S RESPONSE

The problem is a familiar one for those who study comparative and historical Tai and Chinese. I believe the charts provided by the editors speak for themselves: Tai B = Chinese C (qu), and Tai C = Chinese B (shang). Thus in the assignment of numbers to tone, where odd = voiced series and even = voiceless, a Tai ordering would be A = 1, 2; B = 3, 4; and C = 5, 6. However, instead of this natural ordering, as may be seen on the charts which they offer, the editors present the readers with A = 1, 2; B = 5, 6; C = 3, 4. That is inescapably the Chinese order. It is unnatural for students of Tai, as it is unnatural for anyone, when looking at the data to count 1-2-5-6-3-4 rather than 1-2-3-4-5-6-. The editors in their note above refer to this as, "the unfortunate but (in our judgment) inevitable discrepancy." It is that discrepancy, and that judgment, which I have questioned. I applaud the editors' initiative in regularizing the tonal representation, but since this is done so rarely I believe it should have been done in favor of Tai with which the Kam-Sui and Kadai languages are most closely affiliated and with which the readers will be most familiar.

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