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Kinship and Spirit Terms Renewed as Classifiers of “Animate” Nouns and Their Reduced Combining Forms in Austroasiatic

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I take up the hypothesis proposed by Schmit (1904) and Henderson (1976) and analyse the initial velar in initial clusters of consonants in Austroasiatic (AA) languages as the initial of underlying prefixes. More precisely, War-Khasic (WK) (a conservative western MK group of languages, not Khasi dialects, see Daladier (2002b)) has preserved better than other AA languages not only initial clusters of consonants but the very use of four kinship terms as affixes which appear to have played the role of some kind of “animate” noun classifiers. Many of such “animate” nouns also meet in their word formation one of two proto-AA spirit names *3jan and *ran. This double hypothesis is based on the comparison of about one hundred words in WK with MK and Munda already published data. It appears that vestiges of the use of these kinship terms as “animate” classifiers may be reconstructed in cognate lexicons of MK and Munda languages. The complete kin terms cannot always be reconstructed, but regular similarities in what is left of the disyllabic or monosyllabic words having or not kept an initial voiced or voiceless velar consonant indicate both:

- a peculiar AA “animate” notion related to a conception where animate beings are generated through a clan conception of the world. This conception involves a mother, a cultural and a biological father. Animate nouns express edible plants (fruits, seeds or rhizomes), trees, parts of the body, totemic animals, insects and plants used in medicines, natural phenomena such as stones, rocks, stars, earth, rivers, mud, mountains, and vital liquids, such as sap, blood, sperm, water, tears, oil.

- different paths of morphophonemic reductions and different paths of grammaticalization (and shifts). Reduced (k/?i)V and (3)(j)V elements have been further grammaticalized as different kinds of pronouns. AA third person pronouns may be considered as gender/number kind of anaphoric ‘classifiers’. These pronouns are used again as nominal determiners, they take the forms of autonomous clitics indicating three genders and one plural for the non inflecting

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WK nouns and four affixes classifying animate/non animate (usual moving being notion) dual and plural nouns in different Munda languages (these values are found in clitics of different MK languages). Associated with distal and yonder deictics, the AA third person pronouns have produced prepositions, conjunctions, relative pronouns and interrogatives pronouns, or indefinites when agglutinated with grammaticalized forms of ‘one’. Some of these elements are used again with predicates and then indicate various possible combinations of subject and also object thematization (either in affixed forms in Munda or independent clitic association in MK see Daladier 2002a and to appear).

The understanding of the AA original system of velar “animate” classifiers may also help us to retrace AA borrowings in Tibeto-Burman and Tai-Kadai cognate names.

1. Kin terms: *ka, *kur, kñi, *koŋ and spirits *ruŋ *jaŋ as noun formatives


Santali: kaka khura ‘paternal uncle’ and kaka baba ‘stepfather’, have ka still related to the relatives on the father’s side and kuma (all over the Kherwari group) ‘maternal uncle’ with ku- < kur relatives on the mother’s side + ma as in Amwi mama maternal uncle, distributional alternant of kñi.

kɔn < ka + -n- deictic is found in all AA languages for animate beings who bear their children and for the names of the earth, the mud, the deep jungle. ‘Woman, female’: Khasi kenthej, Amwi henthe, Old Khmer, kondow ‘wife of an official’, kondor ‘wife’, Old Mon kantor ‘origin, coming into existence, source’, Old Mon, kanteh ‘dust from which the earth developed’, Shorto. Khasi ‘earth’ kte?. Katuic: Souei has kte? ‘earth’, Ferlus (1974). Bahnaric: Kôho tiał, Stieng tch, Chrau nateh, Sidwell (2000). Khmer ti. Wa languages, Diffloth(1980): Samtao kate?, Tailoi kade, Kien Ka kati involve *ka and te as something close to an AA source. Munda names may be related to the same combining elements: Korku, Mundari, Ho have øte ‘earth, soil, ground, land’ also Korku kheti ‘field’, Sora gade ‘jungle, forest’: Sora kəranj (see *ruŋ below), Santali zongol ‘forest, jungle, place full of undergrowth’ corresponds to the older form gəzar according to Bodding. gəzar might be derived from ka+ zaher ‘sacred grove’, see below. Wa languages often have –Vk rather than, or in a reduplicated addition to, kV- in many of their lexical elements cognate with WK, teak ‘deep jungle wilderness, hill’ might contain *ka and te as in the names of the earth related to the notion of origin and fecundation already listed.

ka is found in ethnonyms of men and in animal names, probably originally totemic like ka ‘fish’ or ‘crab’ (the ancestor of the river) WK *katam, Kherwari *kæTkom, and in many insects used in WK and Santali medicines like the scorpion,
the centipede, different kind of worms and grasshoppers, see Boding (1925) for Santali recipes.

*ka* is found in plant names especially for trees in MK and in Munda, also in the name of rice seed (to plant) in many MK and Munda languages: Khasi, *khāo*, Santali *caole* ‘the husked kernel of cereals, especially of rice’, Boding. Other WK names of the husked rice, the rice to keep for the house, and the paddy usually contains *kur* and its variants (see below).

*kur* > k(h)u/o(l) , ḷu/o, kl- also hor-, kor-, Munda g(u/o)- War-Khasic *kur* ‘clan, relatives on the side of the mother’.

*Kur* is found in Munda and MK, kinship terms, ethnonyms of the men, in different crucial edible plants, in several totemic animals and medicines, in important parts of the body, in the names of the mountain.

_kur_ appears in the names of ‘husked rice, paddy’, War-Khasic kūba? < ku(r) ‘clan’ + ba? ‘grandfather’. For husked rice, several Asian languages have lost the velar prefix and kept bā(?): Benjamin (1976) bā?, South Bahnaric languages have bā for paddy or husked rice. Semang has ba?, Sidewell. Korku and Mundari have bābā and baba, Kharia ba?a, Juang bua for paddy and proto North Munda *baba*, A. Zide and N. Zide (1976). Mundari huṟu, Sora koro’j, Korku koro, Mundari hoče ‘large millet’ are related to the name of the men with *kur> kor, hor and a plural pronoun in ku or -j, exactly like Santali, hora ‘husked rice’.

Amwi ‘betel nut’ kuwa < kur + wa? ‘grand father’ parallels those formations.

_kur_(h)(u)(r/l) are found in different names of animals probably originally totemic, especially the tiger, the horse, the eagle or other prey birds, medicine insects, worms and grasshopper.

‘horse’ War-Khasi: Khasi kulaj, Pnar kulē, Dawki War kuru, Sohka Amwi kulaj?, Thangbuli Amwi kura? (kur ‘clan’ and wa? ‘grandfather’, ‘river’). Munda: some of the Santali dialects and Kharia have ‘horse’: ghoga (< kur), Korku has ghurgi, Sora kurtā, kudta, Gadaba kirkar, krutā, Zide and Zide (1976). Palaung imjaŋ horse. Eastern MK people have borrowed and transformed IA ashvin while Northern and western AA have kur/l- or ki or -jàŋ.

In Sedang (North Bahnaric), khu is used as a classifier (in the usual sense of the term) in various animate names, especially animals like: khu pah snake family, khu kla tiger family, khu pa koŋ family of jungle animals, Smith (1976).

_kur/l- is also found in the AA names of the part of the body, especially the head and the testicles all over Munda and MK languages (including Nicobarese). Thakur 3iu, the old name for God in Santali according to Boding, contains kur ‘relatives on the mother’s side’, ta ‘founder’ and 3iū ‘spirit, soul’. This ta- is also found in Amwi ‘first founder of a clan’ Thāolaj literally ‘the founder who gather together’ (làŋ may be derived from *ruŋ see below Khasi thaoreŋ). Thāo ‘to create, to build’ or ‘cultivated place’ in Khasi, in Pnar and in Amwi has a short
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combining form -t- in WK. kur ‘mountain’ appears in Nyah Kur (Monic), Huffman (1990).

kñi > ki, ḍi, kin-. War-Khasi kñi ‘eldest maternal uncle,’ cultural father.
kñi was sacrifice ‘rat, mouse’ Old Mon kñi?, modern Mon kñī?, Bahnar kñi. Sora kñi-aped
Amwi kintaj ‘guardian spirit of the sacred grove’. In Lawa, ki ‘body’ is used as a
classifier for humans, Diffloth (1980).

AA *unjaj ‘bone, spirit’ and its short compounding forms 3jV
3V as initial in Munda languages, jV in MK, is used all over AA languages for
female ancestors, grandparents, spirits, soul, bones and inside words expressing the
lasting spiritual force of the ancestors (megalith stones in WK, medicines,
ritals). Katsuic and Bahnaric groups have also kept the unjaj root for ‘spirit, soul’: E. Mpong jan, Stieng, Chrau, Kóho jaj, Katsuic azēj.
unjaj is found all over MK and Munda, as an affix in many compounds, to
name tuber, seeds, the kernel of fruits and animals like the scorpion, the eagle (or
vulture) which has peculiar divination powers. In MK ja has often kept k- (or ?-)
prefixes, eventually inside further agglutinations: Amwi tferkjaŋ, ancestor’,
muʃunaj ‘rock’. ‘Ginger’: Khasi siŋ, Pnar sʔiŋ, Amwi jliŋ. The analogy between
the terms for bone/spirit and for ginger is transparent all over the War-Khasic
languages but more generally this relationship can be reconstructed all over the
AA languages. Palaung has jiaŋ for ginger, Danaw katsaj (the word reconstructed
by Sidwell for ‘bone’ in Proto-North Bahnaric), Black Riang kasjaŋ, Luce (1965).
Sora siŋer, Ramamurti (1933) In Standard Khasi lonsiŋ is a plant of the ginger
family with white and pink flowers growing at the base, which are eaten as
vegetable. The morphological relationship between the bones and the turmeric
rhizome reflects the medicinal virtues of longevity of these rhizomes, which link
them to the lasting properties of the bones. In the same fashion, the bones link the
spirit of their departed possessors to the lasting spirit of the clan. ‘Turmeric’ in the
Munda group: Sora, Gorum, Kharia sasaj, Remo, Mundari sasaj. The Munda
names of the turmeric contain the names of the bone in Waic. Waic ‘bone’: Samtao sʔaiŋ, Tailoi sa-ʔaiŋ, Kawa saʔaiŋ. A merger of these forms might be sak +
jiŋ. Bahnaric has sak ḍan ‘human corpse’ that is: s-+ka+*unjaj.
Santali has ḍan- in many words associated with witchcraft, trance
medicinal plants, and intoxicating beverages like ḍanhe ‘a variety of millet for
brewing beer’ and bony parts of the body, like ḍanja leg, foot. The same root is
found in WK names of the leg, foot (the original ŋ is kept in Khasi kďat) and
seed, kernel, Stampe (1985).
AA names of the eagle or kite often combine short forms of “animate” prefixes *kur, *ka, or *koŋ with *ziŋ. Khasi khlieŋ, Amwi klian, Bahnar klian, Khmer khleŋ, Chrau khłan Sidwell (2000), Katuic: Bru, Kui, Pakoh, Katu have klāŋ (Peiros 1996), Pearic klāŋ, Headley (1977), Danaw loŋta?, White Riang laŋ ta, Black Riang klāŋ ta (I do not indicate the tones), Luce (1965): all these may be derived from *kur>*ziŋ. Monic: Thai Mon has (?/k)miŋ, Central Nicobarese kalaŋ ‘white bellied sea eagle’, Man (1889), Nancowry kalaŋ ‘vulture’ Radhakrisnan (1970) may contain*ka and *ziŋ. Nyah Kur has ʔoŋliŋ, Huffman (1990). In the Munda group, Sora alaŋ, A. Zide (1976), Santali, kuriŋ ‘kite’. The use of ziŋ ‘spirit’ in “animate” beings seems to be related to magic and religious practices like using the feathers of the eagle or an egg in divination in Amwi, Sedang, Santal, or to medicine practices of insects or plants: Amwi kiŋŋ (generic term for insects), Sedang kliŋn ‘leech’, Burmese and Tai Mon kajao? ‘maggot’. Mon expresses the eagle’s visions in its name ‘tmat’, Old Mon tinmät, tam ‘mat’, Mod. Mon tamät whereas Amwi has tmat for ‘egg’ (egg breaking is used to divine the name of a child).

ziŋ is found under different reduced forms and gender/alternant vowels in different Munda and MK languages to name female and male ancestors, fertile earth, sacred places: Santali ʒiŋ, əzi ‘grandmother’, əza ‘grandfather’, ʒaŋ ‘sacred grove’ whereas khasi has əzaŋ for a muddy place. Both can be reconstructed as ʒiŋn + kə + -r, where -r has the value of ‘inhabitant, people’ in War and in Munda languages (War, Pnar, Mnar, khara, Kor(ku), Kherwar). Amwi kিŋŋ ‘guardian spirit of the sacred grove’ < kĩ– + -t- +*ziŋ has a word formation which parallels that of Sora: kinziŋ ‘backbone’; the -t- infix has a foundation value all over Munda and War languages (see Thaɔlaŋ supra).

3a-/ja- are short forms of *ziŋ. Santali əzaŋ is a kind of blessing involved to make fruitful the cattle or some medicines in the course of ceremonies. Ho ʒəi gunku (kun child ku plur. 3a-i ancestors) ‘descendents’. MK, ‘grand mother jă in Pnar, a War-Khasi language. War jəoŋbeŋ is the great grandmother of a clan. Old Khmer has jă ‘grand mother’, Jenner (1980). Katuic, jă is found in names of the relatives on the mother’s side: Bru ko jă, Pacoh ku jă. Katu has jă ‘mother in law’. jă / ja?/ jăo related to grand mother, ancestor are also found in Kmic and Bahnaric languages (for example ja? ‘grand mother’ in Stięng and jăo ‘ancestor’, ‘tiger’ in Chrau). Mod. Mon has jă ‘mother, parents’ from jaj Old Mon, Shorto (1962 and 1971), early Middle Mon has ju ‘great grand mother’, Bauer (1984). jă(?) ‘grandmother’ is found in Monic: Danaw, Black and White Riang, Palaung and Wa, Luce (1965).

jă is also grammaticalized as a relative and interrogative pronoun in Old Mon. Bauer (1993) analyses ‘ja as the third singular personal pronoun of the Old Mon pronominal system, attested only in OM frescoes and having the values of
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‘he, him’. ‘ja ‘he, him’ and jā ‘who’ are variants (Bauer p.c.). Old Mon, jaŋ is grammaticalized as an emphatic particle preceding focused nouns especially the subject but also an object, Shorto (1971). As a pronoun grammaticalizing the respect distance involved in the use of jā ‘grandmother’, jā is combined with gender/number personal pronouns in War languages to produce emphatic forms of personal pronouns, especially in Amwi, for example: jāka ‘she, her’ jāo ‘he, him’, jāhem ‘you’, iha ben jā ‘you and me’. za is grammaticalized as an indefinite pronoun in Santali ‘whatever’, however and it can be associated with different elements to produce all kinds of indefinite pronouns like: zāhāte ‘to whatever place’, zāhā tahā ‘here and there’ zāhā tin ‘at any time’. za is also used as an emphatic sentential element in Sora.

In War-Khasic ka- very often stands for an affixed za- in many Munda cognate words, whereas Nicobarese has kept both affixes: WK ka/ Santali zanam ‘birth, give birth, origin’, where nam means ‘religion’ and ‘blood’ in several MK languages. Santali Sīrjan ‘create, creation, a creation’ (sir ‘vein’: any kind of tree shaped artery system, like rivers, lung with its system of air circulation, blood circulation, veins in rocks, veins containing sap in threes etc. where ‘veins’ convey life either in the human body, in plants or in the cosmos. kV and jV are morphologically associated in the corresponding vocabulary of Central or Car-Nicobarese (data of Man): Car Nicobarese, kai jok ‘to give birth’, kai jok njiu ‘to issue from the womb, to be born, birth’, ki ka na ‘female person’, ki ko nya ‘male person’, Central Nicobarese, kaijūa ‘birth’.

The WK names of the cultural father: ‘eldest maternal uncle’ Khasi kñi < kan- + ji*ka + n* ‘jiaŋ , War nju konj (nju < n* ‘jiaŋ + ku_masc.) and kniam ‘sacrifice’ < kan + ja + -m- involve the clan spirit ‘jiaŋ rather than a wild spirit ‘ruŋ. While the biological father produces the flesh of his children, the cultural father, grounds their maternal clan spirit. The sacrifice “feeds” the clan spirit like the bonga stones, abode of the ancestors in the Santali zaher are fed by the sap of the trees.

konj elder maternal aunts, elder brother or sister, madam in Amwi for a woman of the same age than the speaker. Found in AA kinship terms, parts of the body, animals, edible plants, wild or large things or beings. Amwi tkonj ‘tongue’, Sora konṣin ‘elbow’, Santali gono ‘elder paternal uncle’. Within the Munda group, Santali climber plants are named konat and A. Zide and N. Zide (1976) mention gongai as a name for a number of plants: millet, maize, sorghum, bajra all over: Kharia, Juang, Santali, Ho, Mundari. Munda gongai might be derived from: *konj + *ka +=j (j plural) which might enable us to relate a large family of edible plants, both in Munda and in MK languages. konj is also found in animal, part of the body, field names. Rengao (Bnaharic) khoŋ ‘wild beast’; Waic: konj ‘peacock’; kuy ‘wet rice field’ in Tailoi; ‘nose’: in Amwi merkonj (nose’ in Khasi Standard kunj< ka + nul ‘grandmother’+ t- )

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**ruŋ > rXŋ (X=e/a/u/o) is used all over AA languages as a prefix or suffix in nouns denoting: male founders (as opposed to _separator_/jSeparator_ for founders and especially female founders), edible plants, horn and wild animals or wild nature (jungle, mountains, rocks, torrent, river, river with deep bed or huge caves, intoxicating preparations, magic, medicines.


*ruŋkʊŋ rice seed in proto-Munda, A. Zide and N. Zide (1976), Old Khmer rayko Luce (1965), Khmu reŋko?, Cong rukɔ, Lawa rako, Riang ko?, Palaung rākau, Proto Wa *rŋko Diflooth (1980), proto Viet-Muong *rŋko’, proto Katuic *rŋkaw, Old Khmer rayko, Ferlus (1996), Old Mon sγo, modern Mon sγu. One might reconstruct a Proto AA *ruŋkʊk (it is usually assumed that k < g but there are reasons to deny its application in AA where some MK languages violates the dissimulation rule of Greenberg and k/g might be a secondary feature of AA languages in contact with IA or TB languages). Interestingly enough, this *ruŋ is also used in MK languages to name edible seeds or vegetables which have nothing in common from a botanical taxonomic point of view, like ‘sesame’ rəŋa in South Bahnaric languages, Sidwell (2000). Munda: Gorum, reŋra? ‘eggplant’ A. Zide and N. Zide (1976).

This element may be combined with a velar prefix, for example kɾeŋ ‘horn, tusk’ in Tai Mon and Burmese Mon. It is also used in these languages in compounds for trees and for kinds of creeper. The same formation is found for the name of ‘river’, see section 4.

In Viet-Muong the common word for forest in reŋ, Thompson (1976). Köho has kɾoŋ ‘thick forest, jungle’. In Munda, Sora has dereŋ ‘horn’, aɾeŋ ‘stone, rock’, kɭɐŋ ‘forest’, renge ‘wind’, aɾaŋ ‘kite’ (to compare with kɭiaŋ which contains *ʒiaŋ), korraŋ ‘tree bark’ (used in medicines).

2. AA Suffixes in kV in “animate” AA nouns

-ka

-kəŋ

-kur

-ŋi
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Khasi pukñi ‘vulture’ 

-ruŋ

In Viet-Muong the common word for forest in reŋ, Thompson (1976). Köho has kroŋ ‘thick forest, jungle’. In the Munda group, reŋ suffixed in many relevant Sora names: dereŋ ‘horn’, areŋ ‘stone, rock’, kɔnreŋ ‘forest’, rageŋ ‘wind’. ruŋ is used in araŋ ‘kite’, korraŋ ‘tree bark’. It is also found in TK borrowings (see below).

Suffixed metathesis in -ak–-ik–(u/o)k in AA “animate” nouns (eventually duplicating a velar prefix)

kjɔt̪, Old Mon, ‘sacred being or thing’, ‘pagoda’ < k-ja-ik (see borrowings in kja in TB and TK)

ik̪, Santali, excrement (animal excrements are used in medicines), in Wa languages, Samtao ?a?ik ‘tuber, taro’ (also used in medicines and everyday diet)

kruiŋ, Old Mon ‘face’, Khmu muk ‘nose’ khmût̪ ‘nose’, Amwi ‘maternal grandmother, ancestor’ mûi? < muk. in Sre, ma? is used (as in Amwi) for nose, for grandmother and as a respect term of address, Manley (1972). mûi? is also related to verbs of knowledge all over AA languages, like Amwi kâmu? ‘to remember’, to be conscious, Santali mû̊ni < muk + kñi ‘knowledge of magic’.

Wa has ṭok for neck, to be compared with other Munda and MK ‘neck’ in reŋko which merge with the names of the rice all over MK and Munda languages. ṭaŋruk wild dog, Samtao (Wa).

*kjauŋ ‘ear’ in Wa to be compared with ku- and ka- or -kur and -koŋ in other MK ‘ear’: Nyah Kur (Monic) kataol, Palaung kātu, Danaw kātoñ viz. Bahnar: Brao kutûr, Munda: Sora kutur, Kharia lu?tur, Santali lutkur

-ak


teak jungle in Samtao, Wa. vãk insect, worm in Samtao. kjok or karak buffalo in Wa (ja related to the sacrifice) k-ja-k, ka -r- ak

kuvraŋ Sora, bark, husk

sak < s + ka ‘to tear’ and also ‘human corpse’ in sak ʒan, Bahnaric

‘water’ daŋ in many MK and most Munda languages. Munda languages have: Santali, daŋ ‘water’, rain’ (Bodding (1932–7), Kharia, Mundari, Ho, Korwa ‘water’ daŋ, Juang ðaŋ (Grierson), Korku dã/g, Gutob, Remo da?, Zide (1999), Sora, dã ‘water, juice, sap (of a tree)’, Ramamurti (1933). Monic languages also have daŋ for water, Huffman (1990): Thaï Mon, Burmese Mon dac, Nyah Kur dak. In Car-Nicobarese mak, Central Nic. daŋ, Chowra rak, ‘water’, Man (1889).
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Khmer has kak ‘to water liberally, to wash and baŋkak ‘to purify with consecrated water’, Jenner (1980). *dāk is found for ‘water’ in West Bahnaric, South Bahnaric, North Bahnaric Languages, Jacq and Sidwell (2000), Sidwell (2000). Then, *dak can be reconstructed as a proto-AA word.

Amwi ?am ‘water, river’ < ?a- + -m- < ka + -m- , -m- related to mothers who milk their children. Likewise, seven Aslian languages have ?am for breast (which contains milk), see Benjamin (1976).

3. Shifts in the use of kin prefixes and their combining forms in AA

Some of these shifts may be due to the loss of matrilinearity.

**ka viz. kur**

**ka viz. kāi viz. kur**

‘dog’ Sora kònso, Gorum kusòd

**kōj viz. kur**
‘heal’ Khasi kōdonjēzat, Car-Nicobarese kulaj tròñ‘peacock’ kōj in Proto-wa, Difloth viz. Khasi kłóo (see other names in ka in 2)

**ka viz. kōj**
‘neck’ ka’ in Modern Mon, khamej in Palaung viz. kōj in Danaw
‘jungle’ gazar < ka + żaher in Santali viz. kōj in Sedang (North Bahnaric)
‘mouth, tongue’ kantien in Standard Khasi viz. tkoj < -t- + kōj in WK: Amwi and oŋktin < kōj + kin + -t- in Mnar

*raŋ viz. jaŋ*
wild animals, wild plants, wild natural phenomena : mountains, rocks, wind
‘stone, rock’ Viet Muong oŋŋ, Amwi mu?jaŋ < mu? + jaŋ
‘forest’ Viet Muong kǹgŋ, Santali sacred grove żaher < *žjaŋ + *ka+r
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‘kite’ Viet Muong ṭraŋ Amwi ‘eagle’ kliāŋ < *kur + *zjiŋ
‘tree bark’ used in medicines Viet Muong korráŋ < *kur + *ruŋ

4. Borrowings of the AA “animate” and spirit affixes in TB and Tai-Kadai in
cognate names of animals, insects, parts of the body, stone and river.

Such names have been analyzed by Matisoff (1972 and 1986), Thurgood
(1988) and Smith (1975). For example, AA affixes can be found in the proto
Loloish names ‘cat, tiger’: k- + *ruŋ > kroŋ or kur >kula or ‘chicken’ in k- + *ruŋ
+ka >krak (see the MK and Munda names of the peacock in section 2).

Thurgood (1988) shows that an initial k- probably reduced from several
prefixes, must be reconstructed in proto-Lakkia for animal names like: flea, louse,
cow, pig, rat, snake, bear, porcupine, eagle and parts or produces of the body:
urine, sheet, arm-pit, ear, face, neck and bone. Thurgood’s reconstructions show
AA animate prefixes: ka, kə and combining forms k* jū k* roŋ, k* ja. It seems really
interesting that combinations of k- and jəv/ roŋ appear in those very names, for
example ‘intestine’ is reconstructed as kjäiŋ in proto-Lakkia. This kja is renewed
as a classifier for parts of the body and various utensils in other languages (head,
eye, nose, hand, neck, testicle, bile, breast, ear, leg, handle, brush).

Haudricourt (1974) has shown that Tai xau ‘rice’ is derived from MK kao
(as Santali has caole, xau may be derived from an AA kao) and that Miao-Yao klajŋ
for eagle is a borrowing from MK (here analyzed as *kur + *zjiŋ).

Smith (1975) gives a number of animal names in MK with velar initial
which are taken up in Tai, for example in the name of the scorpion, this important
medicine element where a MK ji element which I consider as a reduction from
jiŋ is found in Khasi kniąŋ lartham (lar ‘omen in divination’ and tham ‘crab’), in
North Bahnaric kjip or kəp, Katuic kahip (*ka +*zjiŋ + p), is further transformed
into a velar ki- in Tai: Nṳŋ kim pí as in Santali kidin katkom, lit. insect-crab.

AA *zjiŋ and ruŋ are widely found in TB and TK river names.
Pulleyblank (1991:149) gives a Chinese etymology for jiāŋ ( Tone 1; Pinyin
spelling) as found in the name of the “Yangtze Kyang” river with a Late Middle
Chinese and an Early Middle Chinese (with reference to the Pekingese form). E.
Bruce Brooks (p.c.) reconstructs further this Chinese etymon as gauŋ and relates it
to the second syllable of Mekong, claiming that the jiāŋ (Tone 1) should be
derived from koŋ/kuŋ as found in ‘Mekong’. Jerry Norman and Tsu-lin Mei
(1976) have independently claimed that this kjaŋ (Tone 1) name derives from AA,
but relates it to kruŋ. He gives MK examples of river names taken up from Shorto
(1971): written Mon kruŋ, Brou kruŋ and Katu karuŋ and proposes a Sinitic
derivation where jiāŋ is derived from Middle Sinitic kāŋ < Old Sinitic *kruŋ.
These two derivations of AA kjaŋ given in terms of the different sources: koŋ and
kruŋ are not justified on any kind of internal AA phonological grounds but instead
on a few MK river names. The burden of the phonological proof of a relationship
between kjang and krup or between kjang and kow relies on more or less explicit hypothesis concerning the historical phonology of Chinese. Could it be that AA languages do not deserve having their own phonological laws? Whatever the meaning of ‘Chinese’ may be in terms of a group of languages, these derivations do not look very palatable in the light of an AA etymology of these different AA words indicating previous loci of AA people.

In the light of the uses of *ruŋ as an AA word formative, krup should be analyzed as k- + *ruŋ, where k- is a reduced prefix from one of the elements *ka, *kur, *kni or *kow. Katuic has karuŋ < ka + ruŋ ‘river’. Shorto (1971) gives a list of the MK words related to krup in which various vocalic variants, loss of k- or weakenings of kropa into kloŋ or horŋ river names are found, as could be expected, and no phonetic connection with jay is proposed. The k- of the AA krup is probably the ka which is still found in Katui karuŋ. There are several other AA names for ‘river, especially dak in many Munda and MK languages also ?am, wa? in War, which can all be related to ka- (or its -ak metathesis). As already shown, there are many other meanings than that of river associated with *ruŋ and jay, including names of the earth. In Pnar, kloŋ is a big tree immersed in a natural pool to insure fertility of the earth, while Sora sandrum ‘wealth’, ‘harvest’, ‘paddy’ is associated with domesticated forces. Names of the first founders may be associated with ruŋ but God’s names are rather associated with jay, Sora gade say (lit. the spirit of the earth, gade < kate) and in Wa and War-Khasic with predicates of knowledge. Within kinship terms, *ruŋ remains on a masculine side whereas (z/j)ay is used to denote female founders. *ruŋ has kept something of its wild ‘horn’ meaning in the Amwi and Sre krup, to name impressive horizontal caves under rivers and torrents. jay and ruŋ are both used as river names but in most cases of their other combinations with velar prefixes they appear in names having completely different meanings, as seen earlier. *kow and *ruŋ have different values and are certainly not phonologically equivalent as they are compounded and not merely reduplicated in various “animate” words (with rXŋ vocalic variants) such as Amwi reŋkow ‘fern’ and Pnar khoŋ roy a certain tree in a ritual. This kind of compounding parallels that of (z/j)ay with prefixed or suffixed *ka, *kur, *kni or *kow.

From an AA point of view, *ruŋ ‘river’, *jay ‘bone, ancestor, spirit’ and *kow ‘eldest maternal aunt’ occur in complementary distributions and appear to have three distinct etymologies with corresponding distinct original values which happened to have been suited for their different uses in river names among other ‘beings’. These three roots have played an important morphologic and semantic role in word formation both in Munda and MK languages to name ancestors, bone(s), spirit(s), magic, sacred groves, medicines, and different tubers like ‘ginger’ and ‘turmeric’ assumed to embed eternal life. We have seen that AA *ruŋ is associated with male ancestors, edible wild plants which reproduce sexually,
some bones like in Khasi cheek-bone and eyebrow (as opposed to the bones of the leg/foot) and magic practices as runj ‘trance’. War-Khasi have complex funeral ceremony where the bones are kept until a yearly festival in spring and then are purified in a river before being placed in the maternal clan cairns. The Santal actually spread the ashes of the bones in rivers, Carrin (1986). The use of MK ja in names of so many rivers actually located in China might be related with AA burial ceremonies of the bones in ancestors clan cairns or rivers while *runj might be associated with a former layer of culture and magic practices. Layers of cultures often cohabit, most Christian War believe in good and evil spirits and practice exogamic marriages. Khasi has two words for sacrifice: sān and kňiam which might also belong to different layers of cultures: sān also means taboo, incest and should be compared with Bahnaric sak ẓaŋ ‘human corpse’ -s- + ka + ẓaŋ while kňiam < ka + -n- + ẓjaŋ + -m-. Further comparisons are needed to know whether *runj ‘horn’ belongs to a former layer or to a complementary representation of some of the bony/spirit properties of *zőjaŋ. An interesting point to be added to the discussion is the fact that MK ja and Munda ẓa as well as the velar animate “classifiers”, but not *runj, have been renewed as many different grammatical kinds of pronouns.

It would be just as meaningless to relate phonologically all the AA river names in ẓjaŋ, runj, koŋ, ka, than to relate phonologically all the AA names for ‘men, people’ as inhabitants of a given country, where these elements plus kur, kňi recur in the very same compounding way, as in: Katu, Kawa, War, Khasi, Kherwar, Korku, Nyah Kur, Juang, Rengao (*runj + *ka). AA names for men and rivers appear to be related to the cultural ways people conceive their material and spiritual generation or conceive the way a wild or a socialized spirit grounds and link men, edible plants, animals, or rivers in order to provide and insure life. It seems promising to search for the history of the different AA river names in the light of the different cultures of their speakers and within the distributional properties of some regular compounding element associated with the history of their phonemic alternations.

As could be expected, the ontology of AA languages rely on specific cultural representations of ‘generation’ and ‘spiritual rooting’ rather than on our taxonomic and genetic distinctions among plants, animals, humans and natural phenomena.

References


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