

**Raokot dialect of Palaung spoken in Yunnan:
Phonology and genetic classification**
ระบบเสียงและการจัดแบ่งกลุ่มภาษาปะหล่องเรากตในยูนนาน

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Abstract

In this paper, the synchronic and diachronic phonology of Raokot dialect of Palaung will be outlined. The main purposes are to present phonological descriptions and to discuss phonological innovations in order to place Raokot into the right sub-group. A 1,000 item wordlist with English, Standard Thai, and Chinese glosses was used for data elicitation. The phonological data was elicited from native speakers of Raokot residing in Cha Ye Qing village, Luxi County, Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan Province. The results show that Raokot dialect of Palaung exhibits a phonological pattern of implosivization that seems to be similar to Luce's (1965) Ra-ang and Diffloth's (1991) Ka-ang. The historical development of Raokot phonology suggests that it shares some characteristics with Rumai and is closer to Rumai than the other three dialects of Palaung spoken in Dehong, Yunnan – Liang, Pule, or Raojin. Based on phonological innovations, this study proposes that Raokot should be classified as a sub-dialect of Rumai.

Keywords: Palaung, De'ang, Raokot, Rumai, phonology, Austroasiatic

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการศึกษาวิเคราะห์ระบบเสียงทั้งด้านเฉพาะสมัยและข้ามสมัยของภาษาเราคตซึ่งเป็นภาษากลุ่มหนึ่งของภาษาปะหล่อง วัตถุประสงค์หลักคือ เพื่อนำเสนอระบบเสียงและเพื่ออภิปรายเกี่ยวกับพัฒนาการทางเสียง ซึ่งช่วยให้สามารถจัดเราคตให้อยู่ในกลุ่มย่อยกลุ่มใดกลุ่มหนึ่งของภาษาปะหล่องได้ ข้อมูลที่ใช้วิเคราะห์ได้จากการสอบถามรายการคำ 1,000 คำ ที่เป็นรายการคำศัพท์ภาษาอังกฤษ ภาษาไทย และภาษาจีน เป็นการเก็บข้อมูลจากเจ้าของภาษาที่หมู่บ้านฉาเยซึ่ง แขวงลู๋ซี ในเขตปกครองตนเองเต๋อหัง ไต-จิงโพ มณฑลยูนนาน ผลการวิเคราะห์แสดงให้เห็นว่า เราคตมีรูปแบบระบบเสียงแบบที่เรียกว่า การกลายเสียงลมจากคอเข้า ซึ่งเหมือนกับสิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นในภาษาระอองของลูซ (Luce, 1965) และภาษาเกาะอองของดิฟลอธ (1991) พัฒนาการเชิงประวัติของระบบเสียงเราคตแสดงให้เห็นลักษณะบางอย่างที่เหมือนกับรูไม เราคตใกล้ชิดกับภาษารูไมมากกว่าภาษาเหลียง, ปูเล และเราจิน ซึ่งก็เป็นภาษาปะหล่องที่พูดกันในเต๋อหัง ประเทศจีน บทความนี้เสนอว่า เราคตควรจัดเป็นภาษากลุ่มย่อยของรูไม

คำสำคัญ : ปะหล่อง, เต๋อหัง, เราคต, รูไม, ระบบเสียง, ออสโตรเอเชียติก

1. Introduction

The Palaung language belongs to the Palaungic branch of Mon-Khmer of the Austro-Asiatic language family (Diffloth, 1974). Palaung was first included in the Austro-Asiatic language family by Wilhelm Schmidt (1906). Later, the genetic grouping within the Austro-Asiatic language family was clarified by Sebeok (1942), Shafer (1952), Thomas and Headley (1970) and Diffloth (1974). Diffloth and Zide (2003) divide the Palaungic branch, formerly known as Palaung-Wa, into two sub-branches: the western sub-branch consists of three language groups – Lametic, Anguic, and Waic; the eastern sub-branch includes Danau, the Riang dialects, and a group of Palaung dialects¹. Figure 1 below shows how Palaung relates to the rest of the Austro-Asiatic language family.

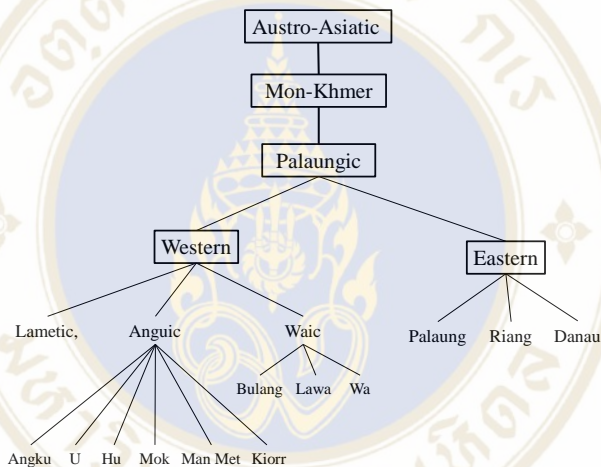


Figure 1 Classifications of Palaungic languages (Diffloth & Zide, 2003)

As mentioned above, Palaung consists of several dialects.² Major contributions to the study of the Palaung dialects are Mitani's (1977, 1978, 1979) works. Mitani (1977) based his classification on the phonological development of similarity and dissimilarity and proposed five sub-groups of Palaung-Riang, which include 1) Central group, 2) Northern group, 3) Southern group, 4) Omachawn, and 5) Unclassified. However, Diffloth (1991) termed the Palaung dialects as 'Palaung-Rumai', which covered several languages. These include Ta-ang or the Palaung of Namhsan (Milne, 1931), Rumai and its dialects, Riang dialects, and Pale. Diffloth (1991) mentioned that Pale contains at least Da-ang, Na-ang, Ka-ang, and Ra-ang. Ostapirat (2009, p.63-76), however, notes that, in general, we may recognize at least three main Palaung dialects: Ta-ang³, Rumai, and

Da-rang. Based on phonological innovations among Palaung dialects, he suggests that the primary split is between the Ta-ang and the Rumai-Darang groups. Later, the Rumai-Darang group was split into Rumai and Darang groups. The Darang group includes Na-ang, Darang, Da-ang, and Dara-ang, as shown in Figure 2

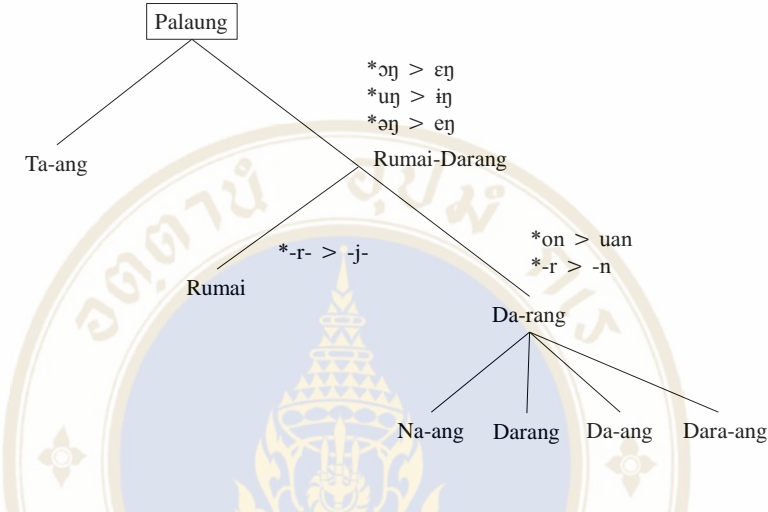


Figure 2 Ostapirat’s (2009) classification of Palaung dialects

From the previous literature reviewed above, it seems that while we know quite a bit about a few Palaung varieties, the branch is large, diverse and still relative poorly documented. As known, geographically, the people who speak the Palaung languages reside in an area covering three countries, namely in Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan, in China; Shan State of Myanmar; and Chiang Mai, together with Chiang Rai provinces in Thailand. That is to say, there is still much to be learned about these people and their languages. This paper is an effort to fill in the gap with an emphasis on the one variety that is spoken by one of the groups of Palaung in China, namely, the Raokot.

Collecting data⁴ in China, we conducted several field trips in order to survey the dialects of Palaung which are spoken in the area of Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province. In these field trips, a wordlist of 1,000 items with English, Standard Thai, and Chinese glosses was used for eliciting the Palaung dialect data. In this paper, we will present the synchronic and diachronic phonology of Raokot, a dialect of Palaung based on data elicited from native speakers residing in Cha Ye Qing village in Luxi County, Dehong of Yunnan Province. The main purpose is to present a phonological description and to discuss phonological innovations in the Raokot dialect of

Palaung in order to place the Raokot into the right sub-group. This paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, information about the Palaung speakers in Yunnan or De’ang nationality is introduced. We briefly present a phoneme inventory in Section 3. Then, in Section 4, phonological innovations in Raokot are discussed. Finally, this paper is concluded in Section 5.

2. The De’ang nationality of Yunnan

In China, the Palaung language is spoken by an ethnic group that is known to the Chinese as belonging to the “De’ang nationality”. In Qing dynasty records, the De’ang was formerly known as “Benglong”. Later, it was officially replaced by De’ang. One reason why the autonym “De’ang” is chosen may be because the Ta-ang dialect is a dialect that is spoken by the Palaung in Namhsan, Shan State, Myanmar, which is considered the standard prestige dialect of the Palaung groups. The other reason, according to one informant, is that the name “Benglong” is related to the historic narrative of being defeated and having to run away; it has a pejorative meaning. In Chinese characters, the official ethnic nationality “De-ang” is 德昂. Deepadung (2011) notes that the word “-ang” means “cliff” or “cave” which reminds the Palaung of the origin of their ancestors. From Deepadung’s (2011, p.88-104) surveys of the area in Dehong Dai-Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan, China, based on names, there are 5 sub-groups which belong to the De’ang nationality : Pule, Raojin, Liang, Rumai and Raokot, as summarized in Table 1

Table 1 Names and locations of the Palaung sub-group sites

Referring to other groups	Autonyms	Exonyms	Location (village)
Pule	Ka-ang	Hong De’ang (Red De’ang)	Meng Dan and Hu Dong Na
Raojin	Na-ang	Hong De’ang (Red De’ang)	Xiang Cai Tang (Huapa)
Liang	Ta-ang	Hua De’ang (Flowery De’ang)	Chu Dong Gua and Lianghe county
Rumai	Rumai	Hei De’ang (Black De’ang)	Nan Sang, Hu Nong Fei Gang
Raokot	La-ang	Hei De’ang (Black De’ang)	Chu Dong Gua, Cha Ye Qing

Adapted from Deepadung (2011, p.94)⁵

According to Deepadung (2011, p.94), the exonyms that the Chinese use to refer to the Palaung speakers derive from the dress of the Palaung – the Palaung women’s tube skirts (“...The Palaung who wear black or red tube skirts are called black or red Palaung, the Palaung who wear skirts with colorful patterns are called flowery Palaung.”). It seems then that to the Chinese mind, the Rumai and Raokot are a single group for which they use the one name, “Hei De’ang.”

Based on their intuition, the native speakers mentioned that Raokot is close to Rumai. Also, from the wordlist collected, both of them seem to have numerous words in common (Deepadung, 2011, p.88-104). However, there are quite a few significant differences⁶. Furthermore, Luce (1965, p.98-129), noted in his 245-item comparative wordlist of Danaw, Mon (old and modern Mon), Rieng (White Striped Rieng and Black Rieng), Palaung (Panku) and Wa (Tung Wa), that the Palaung in his study – which is called “Ra-ang” or “Panku Palaung” – is similar to the Rumai dialect found along the Chinese border (Luce, 1965, p.102)⁷. Therefore, a detailed study of Raokot’s phonological system is definitely worth undertaking. Also, an investigation of some phonological innovations should be conducted.

3. The phonological system of Raokot dialect of Palaung

Raokot has 30 initial consonants. The initial inventory of Raokot includes stops, nasals, fricatives, and approximants. Raokot has five contrasting places of articulation: labial, alveolar, palatal, velar, and glottal. The inventory of initial consonants is summarized in Table 2

Table 2 List of the full inventory of initial consonant phonemes

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p- [p̚-]	t- [t̚-]	tɕ-	k-	ʔ-
	ph-	th-	tɕh-	kh-	
	b-	d-	ɕ-	g-	
Nasals	m̚-	n̚-	ɲ̚-	ŋ̚-	
	m-	n-	ɲ-	ŋ-	
Fricatives	f-	s-		x-	h-
	v-			ɣ-	
Approximants		l̚-	(j̚-)*		
		l-			

In Raokot, stops appear in all places of articulation (labial, alveolar, palatal, velar, and glottal) and display a three-pronged distinction among voiceless, aspirated, and voiced stops, as seen in Table 2. The voiceless unaspirated stops p- and t- are pronounced as voiced implosives [ɓ-] and [ɗ-]. The process of implosivization occurring in Raokot is probably due to the historical development since the same evolution occurs also in some Palaung dialects. That is, the Raokot dialect of Palaung shows a pattern of implosivization similar to Luce's Ra-ang or *Panku Palaung*, namely, the original *p- and *t- become voiced implosives ɓ- and ɗ-, but the original voiced stops are preserved. However, the condition for *p-, *t- > p- [ɓ-], t- [ɗ-] seems to differ from that of Luce's (1965) Ra-ang since in Raokot we could not find irrefutable evidence that implosives have developed. Furthermore, according to Mitani (1977, p.195), in Ra-ang, voiceless stops are not implosivized when occurring in clusters. Regarding our field note, Raokot voiced implosives occurring in clusters were found, for example 'fruit' /plɔj/ [ɓlɔj] and 'thatch' /plãŋ/ [ɓlãŋ]. Apart from Ra-ang, in the Ka-ang dialect reported in Diffloth (1991), there are also implosive sounds which have a similar pattern to Raokot and Ra-ang. That is to say, the original voiced and voiceless stops at palatal and velar points of articulation in Ka-ang are preserved but initial *p- and *t- have become implosives ɓ- and ɗ-.

Diachronically, it can be speculated that Raokot has lost the implosion of [ɓ-] and [ɗ-] in some words, which then became the plain voiced [b-] and [d-], and after that they merged with the original voiced stops, as seen in Table 3. As suggested by Diffloth (1991, p.18), implosion is the point of transition of the reversal of voicing values in Palaung stops. The implosivization pattern, however, seems to be dialect-specific or a parallel development as suggested by Ostapirat (2009, p.71) in that "the changes, especially the implosivization of early voiceless stops, seem to constitute a continuum of ongoing processes which could have occurred independently in each dialect and may be better taken as areal or a parallel development."

Table 3 The merger of *p-, *t- with b-, d- and the implosivization of *p-, *t- > ɓ-, ɗ-

	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin
*b- > b- [b-]			
‘breast, udder’	bu	bu [bu]	pu
‘butt’	saboŋ	saboŋ [sa'boŋ]	sapoŋ
*p- > b- [b-]			
‘flower’	poh	boh [boh]	boh
‘wife, woman’	ʔipǎn	ʔibǎn [ʔi'ban]	ʔibən
*p- > p- [ɓ]			
‘seven’	pu	pu [ɓu]	bu
‘wash’	paj	paj [ɓa:j]	baj
*d- > d- [ɗ-]			
‘taro’	doh	dɔh [dɔx]	toh
‘corner’	kadok	kadok [ka'dokʔ]	katouʔ
*t- > d- [ɗ-]			
‘eight’	ta	da [da:]	da
nine	tim	dim [dim]	dim
*t- > t- [ɗ-]			
six	tɔ	to [ɗo]	do
vegetable	tew	tew [ɗɛu]	dɔ

In Raokot, there is also no initial palatal approximant j- because the original *j- has merged with the initial affricate ɗ-. As seen from the examples in (1), in the Liang, Rumai and Raojin dialects, the contrasting between j- and ɗ- is preserved, while in Raokot these contrastive phonemes are merged. So the word /ɗǎŋ/ ‘stand’ is pronounced the same as /ɗǎŋ/ which means ‘flesh or meat’. Note too that, in Pule, the initial phoneme j- also becomes ɗ- but it does not merge with ɗ- because of the change in the initial palatal consonant voicing.

(1) Examples of the merger of *j- with ɕ-

Gloss	Liang	Pule	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin ⁸
	ɕ-	tɕ-	ɕ-	ɕ-	tɕ-
‘foot’	ɕəŋ	tɕəŋ	ɕəŋ	ɕəŋ	tɕen
‘stand’	ɕaŋ	tɕaŋ	ɕəŋ	ɕǎŋ	tɕəŋ
‘drop, fall’	ɕəh	tɕəh	ɕəh	ɕəh	tɕəh
	j-	ɕ-	j-	ɕ-	j-
‘die’	jám	ɕám	jəm	ɕəm	jám
‘cry’	jam	ɕɛm	jam	ɕám	jam
‘flesh, meat’	jəŋ	ɕəŋ	jaŋ	ɕǎŋ	jaŋ

As for the initial voiceless palatal approximant /j-/ in Table 1, it is important to note that there was only one word found in the data collection — the word /jap/ ‘yawn’. This should be considered as a phoneme because the voiceless palatal approximant /j-/ is still preserved in all dialects of Palaung spoken in Yunnan, China, as exemplified in (2). Additionally, we see that the original initial voiceless palatal approximant j- becomes affricate tɕh- in some words such as /tɕhok/ ‘ear’ and /matɕhaŋ/ ‘female (animal)’.

(2) Examples of initial voiceless palatal approximant /j-/

Gloss	Liang	Pule	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin
‘yawn’	jap	jap	jaʔ	kaǰǎʔ	jap
‘ear’	joʔ	joʔ	tɕhok	tɕhok	ǰauʔ
‘female (animal)’	kama	kame	kama	matɕhaŋ	ǰaŋ

Apart from single initial consonants, Raokot also allows for consonant clusters (C₁C₂). The first member of the initial cluster (C₁) is always a labial, velar, or glottal stop, while the second members (C₂) are restricted to medial -l- and -j-. The complete list of initial consonant clusters is given in Table 4. As seen from the table, there is no medial -r-. Diachronically, medial -j- is the result of the change *-r- > -j- that applies to Rumai and Raokot dialects, as discussed in Section 4. For the cluster ʔj-, it is phonetically pronounced as [ʔi-], for example the word /ʔjoŋ/ [ʔioŋ] ‘feces’. However, ʔj- is considered as a cluster because of the limitation of the occurrence of diphthong [io]. That is, it occurs only before velar nasal [-ŋ]. Also, phonetically, the Raokot implosive [ɓ-] can occur in a cluster with medial consonants [-l-] such as /pl-/ [ɓl-] in the word /plik/ [ɓlik] ‘cover body’ and

/maplen/ [ma'blen] 'leech'. In the Ra-ang dialect recorded in Luce (1965) as discussed above, the implosive sounds were not implosivized when occurring in a cluster.

Table 4 Initial consonant clusters of Raokot

phl-	bl-	pl- [ɓl-]	kl-	khl-	gl-	
phj-	bj-		kj-	khj-		ʔj-

Raokot has 10 phonemic vowels. The vowel system includes three front vowels /i, e, ε/, three back vowels /u, o, ɔ/, and four central vowels /i, ə, ǎ, a/. The full inventory of vowels is given in Table 5.

Table 5 List of the full inventory of vowel phonemes

	Front	Central		Back
		Short	Long	
High	i	i		u
Mid	e	ə [ə]/[əw]		o
Low	ε	ǎ [a]	a [a:]	ɔ

As shown in Table 5, vowel length is not phonemic in Raokot, except for low central vowels, /ǎ/ and /a/. There is no phonemic diphthong in Raokot. The phonetic diphthongs in open syllables were treated as a single vowel ending with final consonants, for example [ai] /-aj/ and [au] /-aw/. In most cases, vowel length depends on the nature of the syllable structure: open syllables are always pronounced as long, while syllables ending with final glottal fricative /-h/ are pronounced as short. In open syllables, the mid central vowel /ə/ [ə] is often pronounced as diphthongized vowel [əw]. It is important to mention that, phonemically, short /ǎ/ [a] vowels are marked since they occur in a more restricted environment than long vowels. Examples of minimal contrast between short /ǎ/ [a] and long /a/ [a:] vowels are given in (3).

(3) Examples of minimal contrast between short / ǎ/ [a] and long /a/ [a:] vowels

Short vowel /ǎ/			Long vowel /a/		
lǎʔ	[laʔ]	‘ladle’	laʔ	[la:ʔ]	‘sharpen’
xǎŋ	[xaŋ]	‘bamboo’	xaŋ	[xa:ŋ]	‘tooth’
ǎŋ	[ʎaŋ]	‘post, pole’	ʔaŋ	[ʔa:ŋ]	‘photograph’
kalǎŋ	[ka'laŋ]	‘round’	kalaŋ	[ka'la:ŋ]	‘speak’

Raokot has 11 final consonants. There is only one series of final stops: plain voiceless /-p, -t, -k, -ʔ/. Apart from final voiceless stops, there are three final nasals /-m, -n, -ŋ/, glottal fricative /-h/, approximants /-w, -j/, and post-glottalized /-jʔ/, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 List of final consonant phonemes

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	-p	-t		-k	-ʔ
Nasals	-m	-n		-ŋ	
Fricative					-h [-h]/ [-ç]/[-x]
Approximants	-w		-j		
Post-glottalized			-jʔ		

Raokot has only one final fricative, glottal fricative /-h/, occurring at the final position of a major syllable. It has three allophones: [h], [ç], and [x], conditioned by preceding vowels. When the phoneme /-h/ is followed by high front vowel /i/ [i], it is pronounced as palatal fricative [-ç]; for example, /dih/ ‘mushroom’ is pronounced as [diç]. The final phoneme /-h/ is pronounced as velar fricative [-x] when it occurs after low back vowel /ɔ/ [ɔ], so that /ŋɔh/ ‘kill’ is pronounced as [ŋɔx].

In Raokot, post-glottalized -jʔ occurs in final position. By comparing with Rumai and Raojin dialects, and also with Dara-ang dialect of Palaung spoken in northern Thailand, we know the original final palatal /-c/ is debuccalized to a palatal glide followed by a glottal constriction -jʔ, which corresponds to final palatal stop /-c/ in Raojin and Dara-ang. As shown in (4), it should be noted that, in Dara-ang, the final palatal stop /-c/ is phonetically realized as [-c̥] in final position. However, in Raojin dialect, there are allophones of final palatal stop /-c/, which is conditioned

by preceding vowels. That is, final palatal stop /-c/ occurring after back and low vowels is realized as post-glottalized glide [-jʔ], whereas it is still realized as final [-cʰ] after front vowels.

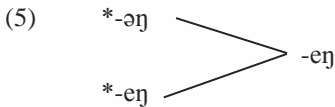
(4) Examples of final post-glottalized -jʔ in Palaung dialects

Gloss	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin	Dara-ang
‘melt’	lajʔ	lajʔ	lăc [lajʔ]	lac [lacʰ]
‘sting’	hujʔ	hujʔ	huc [hujʔ]	huc [hucʰ]
‘wash (dish)’	khojʔ	khojʔ	khoc [khojʔ]	khoc [khocʰ]
‘already finish’	hojʔ	hojʔ	hɔc [hojʔ]	hɔc [hɔcʰ]
‘get up, stand up’	jɔjʔ	ɕɔjʔ	jic [jicʰ]	jic [jicʰ]
‘pig’	lɔjʔ	lɔjʔ	lec [lecʰ]	malec [ma'lecʰ]
‘outside’	kharɔjʔ	naɣɔjʔ	narec [na'recʰ]	narec [na'recʰ]

4. Raokot as a sub-dialect of Rumai dialect of Palaung

Regarding Palaung dialects sub-grouping, Ostapirat (2009, p.63-76) proposes ten phonological criteria for sub-grouping the Palaung dialects – six on rime development, one on final and one on medial consonants, and two on initial consonants. After comparing our data of the Palaung dialect spoken in Yunnan with words given as examples in Ostapirat (2009), we found that the Raokot dialect of Palaung appears to adopt the same change as Rumai and should be classified as a sub-dialect of Rumai.

The phonological criteria proposed by Ostapirat (2009) and innovations indicating that Raokot has created correspondence sets that make Raokot a distinct sub-dialect⁹ are discussed in the following sections.



Gloss	PP	Liang	Pule	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin
‘foot’	*-əŋ	ɕəŋ	təŋ	ɕən	ɕən	tən
‘yarn’	*-əŋ	səŋ	səŋ	sən	sən	sen
‘road’	*-eŋ	teŋ	dəŋdeŋ	ndən	ndən	nten
‘sky’	*-eŋ	pleŋ	pleŋ	plən	blən	blen

According to (5), the change that applies to Rumai, Raokot, and Raojin is the merger of Proto-Palaung (PP) *əŋ with *eŋ. As can be seen above, Liang and Pule still clearly distinguish the two rimes, whereas Rumai, Raokot, and Raojin have merged them. Rumai and Raokot, as was mentioned in Ostapirat (2009), had to first palatalize -ŋ to -ɲ after *e, then -eɲ > -ɔɲ > -ɔn.

(6) *-r- > -j-

Gloss	PP	Liang	Pule	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin
‘sour’	*-r-	braŋ	preŋ	bjaŋ	bjaŋ	praŋ
‘steal’	*-r-	bra	pre	bja	bja	pra
‘bark (dog)’	*-r-	brɔh	prɔh	bjoh	bjɔh	prouh
‘horse’	*-r-	braŋ	mbraŋ	mbjɔŋ	mabjaŋ	mprɔŋ
‘language’	*-r-	krɔh	krɔh	kjoh	kjɔh	grouh
‘buffalo’	*-r-	kraʔ	kreʔ	kjaʔ	makjǎʔ	graʔ
‘rich’	*-r-	khɾəm	khɾam	khjam	khjam	khɾəm

As shown in (6), we can see that the change *-r- > -j- applies to Rumai and Raokot. Moreover, this change is unique to the Rumai-Raokot group, and we can say that this innovation defines the Rumai-Raokot group.

(7) *ɽ- > x-
*r- > ɣ-

Gloss	PP	Liang	Pule	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin
‘bamboo’	*ɽ-	ɽɔŋ	ɽɔŋ	ɽǎŋ	xǎŋ	ɽǎŋ
‘tooth’	*ɽ-	ɽaŋ	ɽeŋ	ɽaŋ	xaŋ	ɽaŋ
‘stick’	*r-	ra	---	ra	ɣa	ra
‘silver’	*r-	rən	rən	rən	ɣən	rən
‘red’	*r-	ɽɔŋ	rəŋ	ʔirɔn	ɣɔn	ren
‘root’	*r-	riah	riah	rəh	ɣəh	riah

The change of *ɽ > x and *r > ɣ applies only to Raokot as shown in (7). It seems to show that this change of voice and voiceless trill initial consonants can be added as an innovation that defines the Raokot as a sub-dialect of Rumai. More evidence to put Raokot together with Rumai can be seen in (8), where final *-r and *-l become lost after certain vowels.

(8) Examples of final *-r and *-l in Palaung dialects

Gloss	PP	Liang	Pule	Rumai	Raokot	Raojin
‘wind’	*-r	khur	khur	khu	khu	khun
‘lead by hand’	*-r	ɗɔr	dar	daj	dāj	tən
‘crawl’	*-r	mər	mər	mə	mə	mən
‘field’	*-r	mar	mar	mɛ	me	man
‘vomit’	*-l	hər	hər	hə	hə	hə
‘fire’	*-l	ŋal	ŋal	ŋaj	ŋāj	ŋɔ

5. Conclusion

In summary, the Raokot dialect of Palaung exhibits an implosivization pattern that seems to be similar to Luce’s (1965) Ra-ang spoken in Myanmar, and Diffloth’s (1991) Ka-ang spoken in Yunnan, China. The historical development of Raokot phonology suggests that it shares some characteristics with Rumai and is closer to Rumai than the other three dialects of Palaung spoken in Dehong, Yunnan – Liang, Pule, or Raojin. Based on phonological innovations, this study proposes that, after splitting into the Rumai-Darang group as suggested by Ostapirat (2009), Rumai further split into Rumai and Raokot. A tentative classification of Palaung dialects proposed by Ostapirat (2009), with Raokot added, is presented in Figure 3.

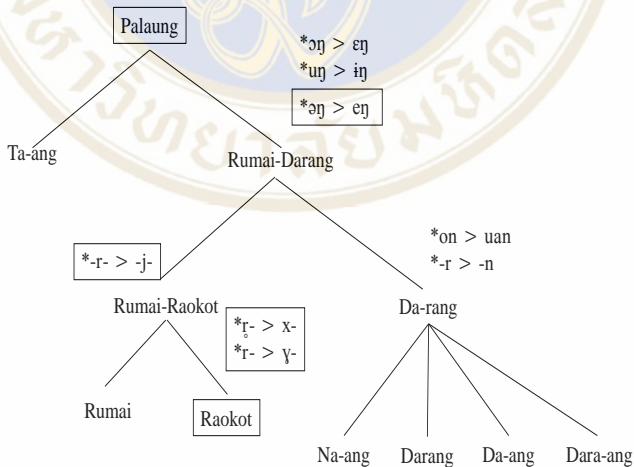


Figure 3 A tentative classification of Palaung dialects proposed by Ostapirat (2009), with Raokot added

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Endnotes

- ¹ For details and state of the art classification of the Palaungic sub-branch, see Sidwell (2009, p.127-133).
- ² See details about a lexical comparison of the Palaung dialects spoken in China, Myanmar and Thailand in Deepadung, Buakaw & Rattanapitak (2015, p.19-38).
- ³ Based on "..., five dialects with comprehensive materials available... Ta: Ta-ang dialect called Pu-le spoken in Yunnan..." was chosen as a representative of the group. (Ostapirat, 2009, p.64)
- ⁴ All of the examples of words in this paper are drawn from the authors' own fieldwork.
- ⁵ See details in Deepaung, 2011, p.88-104.
- ⁶ For lexical comparison of the Palaung dialects, see Deepadung, Buakaw & Rattanapitak, 2015, p.19-38.
- ⁷ Luce (1965, p.98-129) talked about lexicons of the Panku Palaung, with a small note that "...preglottalized initial b and d, are not uncommon in this dialect; they count as surds, not sonants."
- ⁸ More examples of these dialects can be found in Deepadung, Buakaw & Rattanapitak (2015, p.19-38).
- ⁹ For more detail on Proto-Palaung (PP) reconstructed forms, see Mitani (1977, 1979) and Ostapirat (2009)

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