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*Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: Special Session on Tibeto-Burman and Southeast Asian Linguistics* (2002), pp. 73-86

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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 *zjan and *ruŋ. 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/?)V and (z?)jV 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
tonot) dual and plural nouns in different Munda languages (these values are
found in clitics of different MK languages). Associated with distal and yonder
dectics, 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 to us to retrace AA borrowings in Tibeto-Burman and Tai-Kadai
cognate names.

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

*ka > k(h)a/o/ɛ. War-Khasic ka ‘give birth’, ‘be born’, ‘bear’, ‘engender’,
‘womb’, ‘relatives on the side of the father’.
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, kəndɔw ‘wife of an
official’, kəndɔr ‘wife’, Old Mon kəntɔr ‘origin, coming into existence, source’,
Old Mon, kenteh ‘dust from which the earth developed’, Shorto. Khasi ‘earth’
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 oɛ ‘earth, soil, ground, land’ also Korku kheṭi ‘field’, Sora
gade ‘jungle, forest’: Sora kọnaŋ (see *ruŋ below), Santali ʒongol ‘forest, jungle,
place full of undergrowth’ corresponds to the older form gaζar according to
Bodding. gaζar might be derived from kaɾ ẓaher ‘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
*kaTkom, 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).

\[ *kur > (h)u/o(l) \, ?u/o, \text{ kl- also hor-, kor-, Munda g(u/o)- War-Khasic kur `clan, relatives on the side of the mother’.} \]

*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 Aslian 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?, Sidwell. 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 *huRu, Sora koro’, 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, *horo ‘husked rice’. Amwi ‘betel nut’ *kuwa < kur + wa? ‘grand father’ parallels those formations.

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

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

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 *ziu*, the old name for God in Santali according to Boding, contains *kur ‘relatives on the mother’s side’, ta ‘founder’ and *ziu ‘spirit, soul’. This *ta- is also found in Amwi ‘first founder of a clan’ Thālalāŋ literally ‘the founder who gather together’ (laŋ may be derived from *ruŋ see below Khasi *thaoren). 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).

*ki̊*, *ki,* *ki*- War-Khasi *ki̊* ‘eldest maternal uncle,’ *ki* cultural father.

*k̡i̊*an sacrifice

‘rat, mouse’ Old Mon *ki̊i*, modern Mon *kni*, Bahunar *kni*. Sora *kincaped

Sora: *kinadan* ‘crab’, *kinan* ‘tiger’, *kintan* ‘brain’, ‘backbone’ *kintan*

Amwi *kintan* ‘guardian spirit of the sacred grove’. In Lawa, *ki* ‘body’ is used as a classifier for humans, Diffloth (1980).

**AA *ziyan* ‘bone, spirit’ and its short compounding forms **zj***j***V**

*zj***V 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, rituals). Katuic and Bahnaric groups have also kept the *ziyan* root for ‘spirit, soul’: E. Msong *jan*, Stieng, Chrau, Kõho *jān*, Katuic *ażη*

*ziyan* 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 *tʃerki̊jan*, ancestor’, *myʃiyan* ‘rock’. ‘Ginger’: Khasi *sɛiŋ*, Pnar *sɪiŋ*, Amwi *ʃiyan*. 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 *ʃiŋ* for ginger, Danaw *katsay* (the word reconstructed by Sidwell for ‘bone’ in Proto-North Bahnaric), Black Riang *kɔśiaŋ*, Luce (1965).

Sora *siŋer*, Ramamurti (1933) In Standard Khasi *lɔnsiŋ* 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 *sāŋsaŋ*, Remo, Mundari *sasaŋ*. The Munda names of the turmeric contain the names of the bone in Waic. Waic ‘bone’: Samtao *sǐŋ*, Tailoi *sa-ŋ*, Kawa *saʔaŋ*. A merger of these forms might be *sak* + *ziyan*. Bahnaric has *sān* ‘human corpse’ that is: *sz* + *ka* + *ziyan*.

Santali has *szan*- in many words associated with witchcraft, trance medicinal plants, and intoxicating beverages like *szanhe* ‘a variety of millet for brewing beer’ and bony parts of the body, like *szanja* leg, foot. The same root is found in WK names of the leg, foot (the original ȝ is kept in Khasi *kdʒat*) and seed, kernel, Stampe (1985).
AA names of the eagle or kite often combine short forms of “animate” prefixes *kur, *ka, or *koŋ with *γIan. Khasi khîṇ, Amwi klîŋ, Bahnar klāŋ, Khmer khleŋ, Chrau klâŋ Sidwell (2000), Katuic: Bru, Kui, Pakoh, Katu have klâŋ (Peiros 1996), Pearic klâŋ, Headley (1977), Danaw loŋta?, White Riang lâŋ ta, Black Riang klâŋ ta (I do not indicate the tones), Luce (1965): all these may be derived from *kur*+*γIan. Monic: Thai Mon has (?)mîŋ, Central Nicobarese kâlaŋ ‘white bellied sea eagle’, Man (1889), Nancowry kâlaŋ ‘vulture’ Radhakrisnan (1970) may contain*ka and *γIan. Nyah Kur has ṭoŋlaŋ, Huffman (1990). In the Munda group, Sora alaŋ, A. Zide (1976), Santali, kuriŋ ‘kite’. The use of γIan ‘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 kîŋaŋ (generic term for insects), Sedang klîŋ ‘leech’, Burmese and Tai Mon kajao? ‘maggot’. Mon expresses the eagle’s visions in its name ‘tmat’, Old Mon tinmât, tam mât, Mod. Mon tamât whereas Amwi has tmat for ‘egg’ (egg breaking is used to divine the name of a child).

γIan 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 ẓîa, aţi ‘grandmother’, aţa ‘grandfather’, ẓaheř ‘sacred grove’ whereas khasi has zahar for a muddy place. Both can be reconstructed as γIan + ka + -r, where -r has the value of ‘inhabitant, people’ in War and in Munda languages (War, Pnâr, Mnâr, khâra, Koro(ku), Kherwar). Amwi kîntaŋ ‘guardian spirit of the sacred grove’ ‘ni+ -t- +*γIan has a word formation which parallels that of Sora: kînzaŋ ‘backbone’; the -t- infix has a foundation value all over Munda and War languages (see Thaadâŋ supra).

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

jâ is also grammaticalized as a relative and interrogative pronoun in Old Mon. Bauer (1993) analyses jâ 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, jāŋ 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: jākā ‘she, her’ jāō ‘he, him’, jāhem ‘you’, iha bēn jā ‘you and me’. 3a 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’. 3a is also used as an emphatic sentential element in Sora.

In War-Khasic ka- very often stands for an affixed 3a- in many Munda cognate words, whereas Nicobar rese 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 trees 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 nā ‘female person’, ki ko nā ‘male person’, Central Nicobarese, kaijūa ‘birth’.

The WK names of the cultural father: ‘eldest maternal uncle’ Khasi kñi < kan- + ji=kān + n* *jiiŋ, War nju kōŋ (nju < n* *jiiŋ + ku,masc.) and kñiam ‘sacrifice’ < kan + ja + -m- involve the clan spirit *jiiŋ rather than a wild spirit *ruiŋ. 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.

kōŋ 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 tkōŋ ‘tongue’, Sora kōŋ*jīn ‘elbow’, Santali gōŋa ‘elder maternal uncle’. Within the Munda group, Santali climber plants are named kōŋat and A. Zide and N. Zide (1976) mention gōngai as a name for a number of plants: millet, maize, sorghum, bajra all over: Kharia, Juang, Santali, Ho, Mundari. Munda gōngai might be derived from: *kōŋ + *ka + *j (j plural) which might enable us to relate a large family of edible plants, both in Munda and in MK languages. Kōŋ is also found in animal, part of the body, field names. Rengao (Bahnaric) kōŋ ‘wild beast’; Waic: kōŋ ‘peacock’; kuj ‘wet rice field’ in Tailoi; ‘nose’: in Amwi merkōŋ (nose’ in Khasi Standard knut’ < ka + mu? ‘grandmother’ + t- ) .

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*ruŋ > cXŋ (X=e/a/u/o) is used all over AA languages as a prefix or suffix in nouns denoting: male founders (as opposed to ɔV/jV 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.


*ruŋkug rice seed in proto-Munda, A. Zide and N. Zide (1976), Old Khmer raŋko Luce (1965), Khmu reŋko?, Cong ruko, Lawa rako, Riang ko?, Palaung rãkau, Proto Wa *reŋko Diffloth (1980), proto Viet-Muong *reŋko’, proto Katuic *reŋkaw, Old Khmer raŋko, Ferlus (1996), Old Mon syo, modern Mon syu. One might reconstruct a Proto AA *ruŋkuk (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’ raŋa 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 kręay ‘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 kroŋ ‘thick forest, jungle’. In Munda, Sora has dereŋ ‘horn’, areŋ ‘stone, rock’, kanreŋ ‘forest’, renge ‘wind’, areŋ ‘kite’ (to compare with kliay which contains *ʒiaŋ), korraŋ ‘tree bark’ (used in medicines).

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

-ka


-kọŋ


-kur


-kñi
Khasi pukñi ‘vulture’

-ᵦᵣᵩ

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

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

kⱿⱡk, Old Mon, ‘sacred being or thing’, ‘pagoda’ < k-jə-i-k (see borrowings in kⱿ in TB and TK)

iⱿk, Santali, excrement (animal excrements are used in medicines), in Wa languages, Samtao ᵡaᵩk ‘tuber, taro’ (also used in medicines and everyday diet)

kᵩᵱk Mod Mon, testicle

muk, Old Mon ‘face’, Khmu muk ‘nose’ kₐmₐuᵩ ‘nose’, Amwi ‘maternal grandmother, ancestor’ mᵦᵦ < muk. in Sre, mo? is used (as in Amwi) for nose, for grandmother and as a respect term of address, Manley (1972). m? is also related to verbs of knowledge all over AA languages, like Amwi kᵣₐmᵦᵦ ‘to remember’, to be conscious, Santali mᵦᵦᵦᵦ < muk + kñ ‘knowledge of magic’.

Wa has ᵺoⱤk 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.

æreŋk ‘ear’ in Wa to be compared with ku- and ka- or -kur and -kᵯᵦ in other MK ‘ear’: Nyah Kur (Monic) katuöl, Palaung katua, Danaw kᵣᵦᵦᵦn viz. Bahnar: Brao kutᵦᵦ, Munda: Sora kʈᵦᵦ, Kharia luʔᵦᵦᵦ, Santali luᵩkᵦᵦk

-ak


teak jungle in Samtao, Wa. vɐk insect, worm in Samtao. kⱿak or kᵩak buffalo in Wa (ja related to the sacrifice) k-jə-k, ka -r- ak

kᵪᵱᵩk Sora, bark, husk

sak < s + ka ‘to tear’ and also ‘human corpse’ in sak ẓan, Bahnaric ‘water’ dᵩk in many MK and most Munda languages. Munda languages have: Santali, dᵩk ‘water’, rain’ (Bodding (1932-7), Kharia, Mundari, Ho, Korwa ‘water’ dᵩk, Juang dᵦᵦ (Grierson), Korku daᵦᵦ/ᵦ, Gutob, Remo daᵦᵦ, Zide (1999), Sora, ᶜda ‘water, juice, sap (of a tree)’, Ramamurti (1933). Monic languages also have dᵩk for water, Huffman (1990): Thaᵦ Mon, Burmese Mon dac, Nyah Kur dᵩk.

In Car-Nicobarese màk, Central Nic. dᵩk, Chowra raᵩk, ‘water’, Man (1889).
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**

‘crab’ Bahnar katām, mod. Mon gatām, Danaw kātan, Shinman ka?tam, Santali katkam, Korku kaṭkom. Sora *kin*- is used in place of *ka- or kur-* in many War-Khasi names and vice versa: *kinadan* ‘crab’, *kinan* ‘tiger’, *kintōj* ‘brain’, see also the names of the rat below. ‘Sacrifice’ War-Khasic kūnja, Sora kub.


‘dog’ Sora kōnsod, Gorum kusod


**koŋ viz. kur**

‘heal’ Khasi koŋdɔŋdɔzat, Car-Nicobarese kulaj trōn
‘peacock’ koŋ in Proto-wa, Difloth viz. Khasi klēo (see other names in ka in 2)

**ka viz. koŋ**

‘neck’ ka’ in Modern Mon, khameŋ in Palaung viz. koŋ in Danaw
‘jungle’ gazar < ka + zahe in Santali viz. koŋ in Sedang (North Bahnaric)
‘mouth, tongue’ kantien in Standard Khasi viz. tkonj < -t- + koŋ in WK: Amwi and oŋktin < koŋ + kın + -t- in Mnar

**rupŋ viz. jaŋ**

wild animals, wild plants, wild natural phenomena: mountains, rocks, wind
‘stone, rock’ Viet Muong ọreŋ, Amwi muʃjaŋ < mu? + jaŋ
‘forest’ Viet Muong koŋreŋ, Santali sacred grove zahe < *zaŋ + *ka+r
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‘kite’ Viet Muong ṛaŋ Amwi ‘eagle’ klīaŋ < *kur + *ʒjāŋ
‘tree bark’ used in medicines Viet Muong korrāŋ < *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 products 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 jv/ roŋ appear in those very names, for example ‘intestine’ is reconstructed as k$jāi3 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, hear, 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 klaŋ for eagle is a borrowing from MK (here analyzed as *kur + *ʒjiaŋ).

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 jį element which I consider as a reduction from jiaŋ is found in Khasi kįiaŋ lartham (lar ‘omen in divination’ and tham ‘crab’), in North Bahnaric kįp or kąp, Katuic kahip (*ka + *ʒjiaŋ + p), is further transformed into a velar ki- in Tai: Nųŋ kim pū as in Santali kidin katkom, lit. insect-crab.

AA *ʒjiaŋ 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 “Yangzte 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 kon/kaŋ 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 kąŋ < Old Sinitic *kruŋ. These two derivations of AA kjaŋ given in terms of the different sources: kon 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 *kjan and *krug or between *kjan and *koy 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 *ruy as an AA word formative, *krug should be analyzed as k- + *ruy, where k- is a reduced prefix from one of the elements *ka, *kur, *kni or *koy. Kauic has karug < ka + ruy ‘river’. Shorto (1971) gives a list of the MK words related to *krug in which various vocalic variants, loss of k- or weakenings of kruy into kloj or hoy river names are found, as could be expected, and no phonetic connection with jay is proposed. The k- of the AA *krug is probably the ka which is still found in Kauic karug. 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 *ruy and jay, including names of the earth. In Pnar, kloj 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 crops. Names of the first founders may be associated with ruy but God’s names are rather associated with jay, Sora gade zay (lit. the spirit of the earth, gade < kate) and in Wa and War-Khasic with predicates of knowledge. Within kinship terms, *ruy remains on a masculine side whereas (z/j)ay is used to denote female founders. *ruy has kept something of its wild ‘horn’ meaning in the Amwi and Sre kray, to name impressive horizontal caves under rivers and torrents. jay and ruy 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. *koy and *ruy have different values and are certainly not phonologically equivalent as they are compounded and not merely reduplicated in various “animate” words (with RXj vocalic variants) such as Amwi rejkoy ‘fern’ and Pnar khoj rey a certain tree in a ritual. This kind of compounding parallels that of (z/j)ay with prefixed or suffixed *ka, *kur, *kni or *koy.

From an AA point of view, *ruy ‘river’, *jay ‘bone, ancestor, spirit’ and *koy ‘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 *ruy 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 ranjāj ‘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 jāj 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: saŋ and kñiam which might also belong to different layers of cultures: saŋ also means taboo, incest and should be compared with Bahnaric sak ǝŋ ‘human corpse’ -s- + ka + ǝŋ while kñiam < ka + -n- + ǝŋ + -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 *ǝŋj. An interesting point to be added to the discussion is the fact that MK ja and Munda ǝŋ as well as the velar aninate “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 ǝŋj, 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, kñi 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.

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