



MAP 4 Areas where NORTHERN and LAMPANG PWO KAREN are Spoken

5. A Comparison of the Varieties of Pwo Karen Spoken in Northern Thailand to Varieties Spoken in Other Regions

In the previous sections I have made the claim that there are two major dialect groupings of Pwo Karen spoken in northern Thailand. One of these, I have labeled LAMPANG PWO KAREN, the other I have given a more general label: NORTHERN PWO KAREN. Labeling a dialect grouping "Northern" Pwo Karen implies a distinction between this dialect grouping and varieties spoken in other parts of Thailand. In this section, I will show that such a distinction is apparent from the data. The varieties of Pwo Karen spoken in the northern provinces are substantially different from those spoken in the central provinces of Kanchanaburi and Uthai Thani and the southern province of Phetburi. We will also see that it is quite different from three varieties spoken in Burma.

Data for the lexicostatistic analysis presented below were taken from a variety of

sources. The figures given are subject to a higher range of error than the figures presented for the varieties of Pwo Karen spoken in the North since I have limited knowledge of the Pwo Karen varieties spoken south of Mae Hong Son and elicitation techniques may have varied considerably between the various researchers. Of the comparisons below, those given for the dialects spoken in Phetburi and Kanchanaburi provinces have the lowest range of error since the data from Phetburi (PHU PHLU and NONG POEN TAEK) and Kanchanaburi (ONGSIT and WACHONGKHU) was gathered using the same word lists (elicited by David and Suree Anderson) which were collected quite recently (1987). In each case, 349-384 words were compared with the northern varieties. Although the data from Uthai Thani appear to be of the same variety as that from Kanchanaburi and Phetburi (data from Kaewsilpa, 1982), for comparison with the northern dialects only 232-237 words were available. The data from the KAWAREIK dialect in Burma come from a word list collected by Paulette Hopple in 1984. This variety is spoken in the mountain region of Burma between Moulmein and Mae Sot (Tak province of Thailand). For comparison between this variety and the northern varieties 222-225 words were available. Finally, the Pwo Karen data from BASSEIN and MOULMEIN were taken from Jones (1961). 222-227 words were compared with the northern varieties.

BAAN DOI (Chiang Rai)
 96 WANG LUANG (Chiang Mai)
 96 96 MAE LEK (Lamphun)
 96 96 96 SALOK (Phrae)
 95 95 97 95 PA LAU (Lamphun)
 95 97 95 94 93 TIAN ANG (Chiang Mai)
 97 95 95 95 95 94 NONG RAK (Lamphun)
 94 94 95 96 96 93 94 MAE JONG FAI (Phrae)
 97 95 95 94 94 93 95 93 THUNG KHONG (Chiang Rai)
 94 95 93 93 92 96 92 92 92 YANG KHROK (Chiang Mai)
 94 92 93 93 93 92 92 95 91 92 BAAN KLANG (Lampang)
 93 92 91 92 92 92 91 93 91 91 97 RUAM MIT (Chiang Rai)
 93 92 92 92 92 91 92 94 92 90 96 97 MAE SAAN (Lampang)
 93 93 94 92 93 92 93 93 92 91 90 89 90 HUAI LA (Lamphun)
 93 94 93 91 91 93 92 91 92 91 90 89 90 94 HUAI MUANG (Chiang Mai)
 92 94 91 91 90 94 91 91 90 93 91 91 90 90 89 MAE KHONG KLANG (Chiang Mai)
 93 94 93 92 91 96 91 91 91 94 90 90 89 90 91 92 THUNG PHRAW (Mae Hong Son)
 82 81 81 81 81 81 83 82 82 81 80 78 79 80 79 79 81 BAAN RAI (Uthai Thani)
 80 79 79 81 79 80 78 80 78 79 77 77 77 78 78 76 78 93 ONGSIT (Kanchanaburi)
 80 80 80 81 78 80 79 80 78 78 78 77 77 77 78 77 78 93 94 WACHONGKU (Kanchanaburi)
 79 79 79 80 78 79 78 79 78 78 77 77 76 78 78 75 77 89 92 90 PHU PHLU (Phetburi)
 80 79 79 80 78 79 79 80 78 78 77 77 76 78 78 76 78 89 90 90 93 NONG POEN TAEK (Phetburi)
 79 78 78 79 80 77 79 79 78 77 78 76 76 76 75 76 75 88 85 86 83 83 KAWKAREIK (BURMA)
 84 83 84 83 83 83 84 83 83 83 84 83 82 81 81 82 81 90 86 88 85 85 88 MOULMEIN (BURMA)
 83 82 82 82 82 83 83 82 82 82 82 82 81 80 81 80 81 90 85 87 85 84 88 99 BASSEIN (BURMA)

TABLE 11 Lexical Similarity Percentages for Various Varieties of Pwo Karen

From the limited data available from the central and southern regions it is unclear how many dialect groupings are represented there. However, we can reach some definite conclusions regarding the relationship of the Pwo Karen varieties spoken in the provinces of Kanchanaburi, Phetburi and Uthai Thani²⁰ to those spoken in the northern region. The Uthai Thani variety is 81.5% lexically similar to NORTHERN PWO KAREN and 79% lexically similar to LAMPANG PWO KAREN. The Kanchanaburi varieties are 79.3% lexically similar to NORTHERN PWO KAREN and 77% lexically similar to LAMPANG PWO KAREN. The Phetburi varieties are 78.8% lexically similar to NORTHERN PWO KAREN and 76.7% lexically similar to LAMPANG PWO KAREN. These figures clearly indicate a strong difference between both NORTHERN PWO KAREN and LAMPANG PWO KAREN and the speech varieties in the central and southern regions of Thailand.

²⁰These are the only three southern or central provinces that I have data from.

We can also make some observations regarding the relationship of NORTHERN PWO KAREN and LAMPANG PWO KAREN to the varieties of Pwo Karen spoken in Burma. Once again, our data are limited. However, it is clear that the Burmese varieties represent different dialect groupings than the varieties spoken in northern Thailand. The Kawareik variety is 78.4% lexically similar to NORTHERN PWO KAREN and 76.7% lexically similar to LAMPANG PWO KAREN. It is 88% lexically similar to the MOULMEIN/BASSEIN²¹ variety. It is 83% lexically similar to the Phetburi varieties, 85.5% lexically similar to the Kanchanaburi varieties, and 88% lexically similar to the Uthai Thani variety, the northernmost of the three. It is likely that there is a continuum of Pwo Karen dialects running north to south in Thailand. How the Burmese varieties tie into this continuum is unclear. However, based on the data from KAWAREIK it is possible that the KAWAREIK variety would be most closely related to the Pwo Karen spoken in the Mae Sot area (of Thailand). Of the varieties of Pwo Karen considered for which data are available, it is closest lexically to the variety spoken in Uthai Thani province which is in central Thailand, south of Mae Sot.

The Moulmein/Bassein variety spoken in Burma is 82.8% lexically similar to NORTHERN PWO KAREN and 82.3% lexically similar to LAMPANG PWO KAREN. It is 86.5% lexically similar to the Kanchanaburi variety and 84.7% lexically similar to the Phetburi varieties. It is closest to the Uthai Thani variety with 90% lexical similarity. Thus, the Burmese varieties of Pwo Karen in this study appear to be most closely related to the varieties of Pwo Karen that are spoken in central Thailand.

6. Conclusions

In this study I have sought to clarify the relationship of the various varieties of Pwo Karen spoken in northern Thailand. We have seen that there is evidence to

²¹Lexically these two speech varieties are nearly identical.