

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### 7.0 Introduction

The main task of this thesis is to answer the research question: What is the relationship between Koho and Maa varieties. The following sections will summarize the findings in this thesis and suggest some areas for further study.

#### 7.1 Summary of Findings

This thesis began with the discussion of various aspects of the Koho and Maa. The Koho and Maa have inhabited the south central highlands in general and live in Lam Dong Province in particular. Both Koho and Maa have been classified within the South Bahnaric subgroup in the Mon-Khmer language family. There are many speech varieties of Koho and Maa, but seven of which are utilized in this investigation.

There are some previous reconstructions of South Bahnaric subgroups, but not in the Koho and Maa languages. These reconstructions are Blood's (1966) Proto Mnong, Efimov's (1990, as reported in Sidwell 2000) Proto South Bahnaric, and Sidwell's (2000) Proto South Bahnaric. This thesis reviewed the work of Blood (1966) and that of Sidwell (2000).

All speech varieties under investigation are sesquisyllabic, "one and a half syllables," consistent with the nature of Mon-Khmer languages. Sesquisyllabic words have a weak and a strong syllable, with the weak (sometimes called the presyllable or minor syllable) being unstressed and the strong (or major) syllable being stressed. The word template is:  $(C_{p1}\text{ə})(C_{p2})C_1(C_2)V_1(V_2)(G)(C_3)$ . The speech varieties share the same inventory of 21 consonants and the inventory of from 7 to 10 vowel system.

By the method of lexicostatistics, a preliminary subgrouping is proposed. The Maa group is more cohesive than the Koho group. Koho Cil and Koho Lach are in one group while Koho Sre, Koho Nop, and the Maa varieties are in another. From this grouping, it is hypothesized that the varieties have a tendency to be grouped according to their geography, since Koho Cil and Koho Lach are both located in the north of Lam Dong Province while the rest of the varieties are located in the south of the Province.

The phonological reconstruction in Chapter 5 covers various elements of a phonological word, from main syllables to presyllables. Main syllables are reconstructed in different categories. The proto onsets of the main syllable have been fairly well preserved in all Koho and Maa speech varieties. The proto nuclei are rather innovative, since all the descendant speech varieties have changed the proto forms to a certain degree. The proto codas are less stable than the proto onsets. Presyllables were reconstructed as units. The result of the presyllable reconstruction shows that all speech varieties have been undergone a process of deletion, i.e. presyllables are commonly deleted, and this deletion does not seem to cause problems in the understanding. All speech varieties can either drop the neutral vowel, the onset, or the coda of presyllables. Maa varieties, particularly Maa Dagui, tend to entirely delete the presyllables.

By counting the phonological rules from the reconstruction section, it can be seen that Koho Cil is the most innovative variety with eleven rules and Koho Lach is the second most innovative variety with eight rules while Maa Tadung is the most conservative with one rule. It means that both Koho Cil and Koho Lach have diverged from the proto language more than Sre, Nop, and the Maa varieties.

The shared rules in Table 152 were turned into a tree by calculating the Jaccardian coefficients. The resulting analysis from shared phonological rules shows that Koho Cil and Koho Lach are in a separate group with few phonological rules shared with

the other varieties. The other group includes Maa Dagui and Koho Nop with the highest number of shared phonological rules, followed by Koho Sre, Maa Tadung, and Maa Chop with fewer shared phonological rules. This division into two subgroups based on shared phonological rules is somewhat consistent with the results of lexicostatistics, since Koho Cil and Koho Lach stand in one group and the rest of the speech varieties belong in another group. However, the lexicostatistic subgrouping and the phonological subgrouping have some differences. The phonological reconstruction shows Maa Dagui and Koho Nop are the most phonologically related while Maa Chop and Koho Sre are the most similar lexically.

The resulting analysis from shared phonological rules and lexicostatistics shows that Koho and Maa speech varieties are not distant related with each other, so they may be best considered as closely related varieties,<sup>9</sup> although there are considerable phonological and lexical differences, particularly among Koho varieties. The results also identify two subgroups: Northern which includes Koho Cil and Koho Lach, and the Southern group which is comprised of the Maa varieties, Koho Nop, and Koho Sre. This subgrouping is consistent with the geographic locations of these groups since the Koho Cil and Koho Lach inhabit areas to the north of Lam Dong Province, while the other groups are located in the south of the province.

The subgrouping in this thesis challenges the traditional Koho grouping in which Koho Cil and Koho Lach are put together with Koho Sre and Koho Nop. The Koho grouping itself is not very cohesive; it is fractured into two different groups. The Koho Cil and Koho Lach look fairly independent and could possibly be classified as something other than Koho. This suggestion is congruent with sociolinguistic research, as the Koho Cil and Koho Lach often refuse to identify themselves as Koho.

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<sup>9</sup> This result should also be considered with other relevant data such as sociolinguistic attitudes and intelligibility.

## 7.2 Suggestions for Further Study

Having summarized the results from the lexicostatistic comparison and the phonological reconstruction, this thesis discusses four particular areas deserving special mention for future research.

First, in these speech varieties, tone is an interesting area. Many scholars (Manley 1972, Tạ Văn Thông 1988a, and Lê Khắc Cường 2000) mentioned tone but did not discuss it precisely. This thesis also found tones in the speech varieties; however, tonal analysis is beyond the scope of the current study. A further detailed phonetic study on tones will make a very meaningful contribution.

Second, besides the seven Koho and Maa speech varieties analyzed in this study, there are other varieties of Koho, including T'ring, Kodon, Laya, Rien, among others. A further study including these varieties would be recommended since this expanded analysis would form the basis of a more detailed classification of Koho and Maa speech varieties. The inclusion of these varieties would be helpful and interesting in terms of loan word identification since the T'ring are located in Don Duong District near Chru and Roglai settlements, and the Kodon are located Gia Bac Hamlet near Cham settlements in Ninh Thuan Province.

Third, further research on identification of loan words is strongly suggested, since these loan words must be eliminated prior to comparative analysis. This thesis compared lexical sets to find and eliminate the obvious borrowed forms; however, there may still be some forms which were not screened out. A further detailed study on borrowing phenomena would be meaningful to historical and comparative linguistics since there are many common words shared by different ethnic groups (both Mon-Khmer and Chamic) in the Highlands. These groups include Bahnar, Sedang, Jarai, Rade, Mnong, Koho, and Jeh, among others (Hoàng Thị Dương 1992).

Fourth, another area that should be addressed is where the names for the different groups originate. Scholars who give names for different groups should specify the basis for the name they use. This would help to insure that names for each particular group are consistently presented. The names used for Koho and Maa varieties are somewhat misleading. For instance, why are there so many groupings and names in the Maa groups? It would be interesting to consider other information such as geography, common history, oral traditions, people's attitudes, grammar, semantics, comprehension, cultural and social relationships, etc. to gain a full picture of the cultural and linguistic groupings.

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