

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Kuy is a Mon-Khmer language spoken in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. There have been a number of studies of Kuy varieties¹ in Thailand, but little research has been done on Kuy varieties in Cambodia or Laos. The goal of this thesis is to identify the basic speech varieties of Kuy in Cambodia and to determine the relationships between these varieties. To accomplish this goal, the following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Where are Kuy speakers located in Cambodia?
2. What varieties or dialects of Kuy do they speak?
3. What are the relationships between the Kuy varieties spoken in Cambodia?

Pursuant with this goal, four main investigative measures are employed. Sociolinguistic questionnaires are used to elicit information on locations of speakers and self-identification of groupings. Lexicostatistical comparison provides a preliminary outline of the linguistic groupings. Comparative phonological reconstruction, based on a representative wordlist from each identified dialect, gives a partial picture of the diachronic phonological relationships between the varieties. Finally, comprehension testing between viable dialects determines the percentage of comprehension of a given story in the dialects. The research methods used in this study will be introduced briefly in this chapter, with more detailed descriptions of each method given in subsequent chapters.

¹ The speech samples of each geographical location are first referred to in this thesis as *varieties* (a more generic cover term) until the data is analyzed, after which the varieties can be classified either as distinct languages or grouped into *dialects*, which in this thesis refers to clusters of varieties that show a high degree of similarity.

This introductory chapter will give background information on the Kuy language (also called Kui or Kuay, see discussion in Section 1.1), as well as the general locations of Kuy speakers in Southeast Asia. A review of the relevant literature on Kuy is presented in this chapter, while works relevant to the investigative measures employed in this thesis are reviewed in the methodology sections of the respective chapters.

1.1 Language name and classification

The term Kuy will be used in this thesis to refer to both the people and their language. The Kuy language is spoken in three countries: Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. The language has been referred to by several other names or alternate spellings in the literature, such as Kui, Kuuy, Kuay, Kouy, Suay, Sui, Soei, Souei, or Khamen Boran. In Laos, they are primarily called Suay. In Thailand, they are referred to by the Thai primarily as ส่วย Suay, and speakers also refer to themselves by this name when speaking with Thai or Lao people. Among themselves the Kuy prefer to use the terms Kuy (Kui) or Kuay. These latter names represent the word for person in Kuy. Within Thailand, the pronunciation of *ku:j* or *kuaj* ‘person’ (and thus the spelling, Kuy/Kui or Kuay) reflects the particular dialect spoken. Generally, in the literature, when referring to the language as a whole, the most common spellings are Kui or Kuy. In Cambodia, even though the pronunciation of the word ‘person’ varies by location [*ku:j*, *koəj*, *kuaj*], speakers seem to generally refer to Kuy people with the pronunciation *ku:j*. The term Kuy will be used throughout this thesis, except when referring to other works.

Kuy is a Mon-Khmer language. Thomas & Headley (1970) divided Mon-Khmer languages into nine branches: Pearic, Khmer, Bahnaric, Katuic, Khmuic, Monic, Palaungic, Khasi, and Viet-Muong. Headley later (1976:34-5) reclassified Mon-Khmer to include Eastern Mon-Khmer, Northern Mon-Khmer and several other smaller subfamilies, with Eastern Mon-Khmer broken down into Bahnaric, Katuic, Monic, and Viet-Muong. The Ethnologue classification (B. Grimes 2000)

divides Eastern Mon-Khmer into Bahnaric, Katuic, Khmer and Pearic languages, as shown in Figure 1.

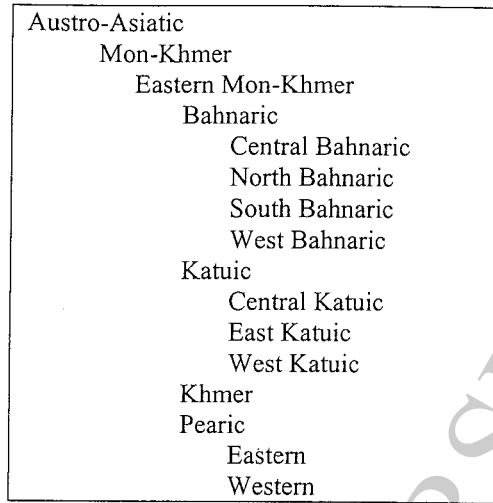


Figure 1. Classification of Eastern Mon-Khmer languages (adapted from B. Grimes 2000)

Within the Mon-Khmer language family, other researchers have different classifications. However, the focus here will be on the various divisions within the Katuic branch, since Kuy is consistently classified as a Katuic language. Thomas and Headley (1970) suggested that Katuic could be seen as a wave of languages, rather than the two separate groupings of South Katuic and North Katuic initially proposed by Thomas (1966b). Smith (1981) later divided Katuic languages into five main groups: Katu (Katu, Kantu/High Katu); Pacoh (Pacoh, Phuang); Central Katuic (Ta'oih, Ngeq, Nkriang, Ong, Inh, Kasseng/Talieng); North Katuic (Bru, Makong, Bruu, So, Suei/Sui, Kataang, Siliq, Lor/Klor, Leun); and West Katuic (Kuy, Nyeu, Kuay). Miller and Miller (1996, 2001), summarizing several works, place 'Kui' in the West Katuic group (along with Kuai, Suai and Nheu). The Ethnologue (B. Grimes 2000) divides Katuic languages into Central, East and West, with the Kuay-Yoe subgroup and Brou-So subgroup comprising West Katuic. Ta'oih languages are Central Katuic, while Kaseng, Katu-Pacoh and Ngeq-Nkriang are East Katuic subgroups. Figure 2 shows the place of Kuy within the Katuic branch according to the Ethnologue.

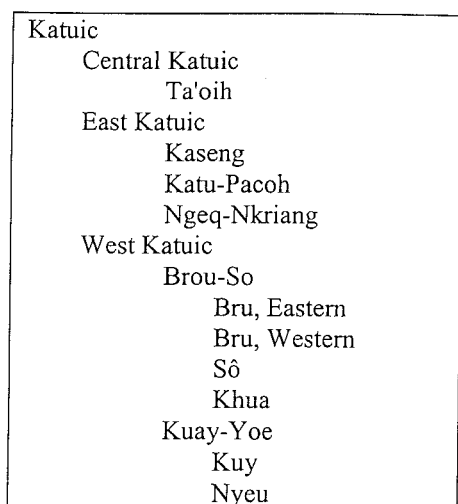


Figure 2. Classification of Katuic languages (adapted from B. Grimes 2000)

This division into Central, East and West Katuic basically corresponds with Diffloth's classification, as published in Chazée (1999:10). Theraphan (2001:118), based on research in southern Laos, divides all Katuic varieties into West Katuic (Thailand-Cambodia) and East Katuic (Laos-Vietnam), with the East group further divided into North, Central and South, as shown in Figure 3.

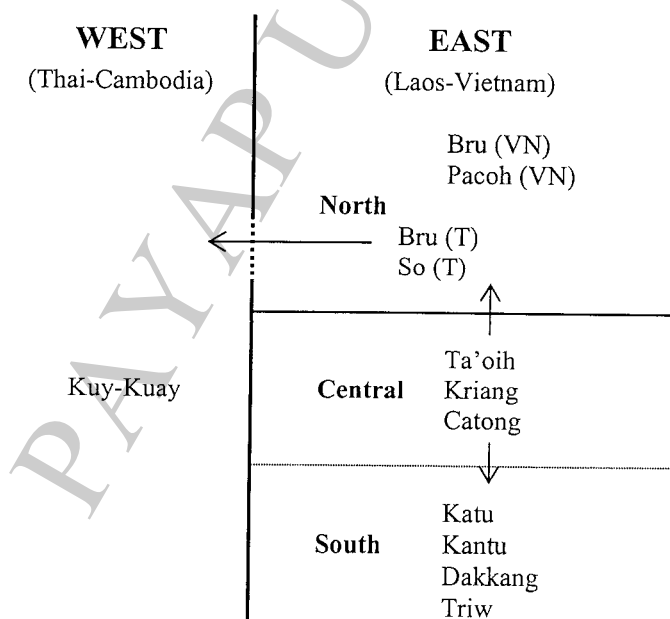


Figure 3. Classification of Katuic languages (Theraphan 2001:118)

The arrow crossing the division of West and East in Figure 3 indicates that while Bru (T) and So (T) fit linguistically in the North subgroup of East Katuic languages, the speakers are located geographically in Thailand. The smaller arrows and dotted line within East Katuic presumably indicate somewhat tenuous divisions.

Sidwell (2004) divides Katuic into four separate groups, and reclassifies some of the languages as follows in Figure 4.

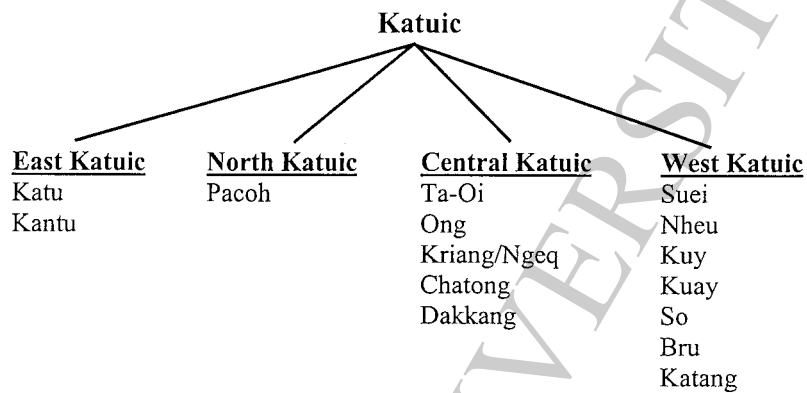


Figure 4. Classification of Katuic languages (adapted from Sidwell 2004)

The preceding classifications, while differing slightly on the divisions within Katuic and the placement of some languages, all agree in placing Kuy in the West Katuic group.

1.2 People and geography

Kuy speakers are found in Cambodia, Thailand and Laos. Generally speaking, they are located near the borders where the three countries meet, as illustrated in Figure 5, with a few villages scattered in other parts of these countries. Within the rough shaded area in Figure 5, Kuy villages are interspersed with many other language groups.



Figure 5. General location of Kuy in Southeast Asia

The estimated numbers of Kuy speakers varies in the literature. Sometimes it is not clear whether the numbers reflect only those who speak the language, or the broader group of those who are ethnically Kuy but have assimilated to the speech of their neighbors and no longer speak the language of their ancestors.

The largest numbers of Kuy are found in Thailand. Kuy live in the southeastern part of northeast Thailand, between the Mun River and the Dong Rek mountains (which form the border with Cambodia), mainly in the provinces of Surin, Sisaket, and Buriram, with a few villages also in Ubon Ratchathani, Mahasarakham, and Suphanburi (Wanna 1994). Van der Haak and Woykos (1990), after completing a rough dialect survey among the Kuy in Surin and Sisaket provinces, estimated 220,920 Kuy people in those two provinces, based on the number of villages identified. Expanding on the 1990 survey, Wanna (1994) estimated 273,570 Kuy people in four provinces (adding Ubon and Buriram). Johnstone (1993) gives a total of 234,000 Kuy in Thailand, while an updated edition of the same work (Johnstone and Mandryk 2001) shows a slightly lower number of 217,000, possibly due to assimilation. The *Ethnologue* (B. Grimes 2000) lists a figure of 300,000 for the Kuy in Thailand.

In Laos, according to a 1995 government census (as reported in Chazée 1999:84), there were 45,498 Kuy people (called Suay) in over 70 villages. Chazée's personal

estimate is about 50,000 persons (1999:84). These are concentrated in southern Laos, in the provinces of Salavan, Champassak, Savannakhet and Xekong. The areas where they live are “bordered by the Lao and Katang, and now by the Taoy and Lavene” (Chazée 1999:84). The Suay are reported to live at lower altitudes in valleys or along the borders of plains and subsist on lowland paddy cultivation. Johnstone (1993) reports 64,000 Kuy (Suay) in Laos, while Johnstone and Mandryk (2001) give a figure of 51,200.

Cambodia is less well documented, and so the numbers vary more widely. B. Grimes (2000) reports 15,495 Kuy in Cambodia, Johnstone (1993) reports an estimate of 16,000 or more, while Johnstone and Mandryk (2001) give an unusually high figure of 212,000 (which is likely a misprint). Newhouse (personal communication, 2003) gives an informal estimate of 30,000 or more, based on personal visits to many Kuy villages combined with 1998 census information.

Lefebvre (2000) gathered data from provincial officials on populations of minority groups in northern provinces of Cambodia. He estimated 23,144 Kuy (as shown in Table 1 by province and district), though he notes that for Kuy “these estimates are a result from talking with different people, who are familiar with the area; they are not to be taken as absolutes” (Lefebvre 2000: pages not numbered).

	Kuy – estimated population ²	% of all pop. in that area which are Kuy
Preah Vihear Province³	16,221	14%
Chey Saen District (5)	5,531	36%
Rovieng District (10)	5,322	20%
Tbaeng Mean Chey District (4)	3,559	18%
Choam Khsant District (1)	567	4%
Chhaeb District (2)	561	5%
Kracheh Province	5,216	2%
Kracheh District (2)	4,826	6%
Sambour District (1)	390	1%
Stueng Traeng Province	1,707	2%
Thala Barivat District (4)	1,174	5%
Siem Bouk District (1)	533	40%
TOTAL (3 Provinces)	23,144	5%

Table 1. Population of Kuy in Cambodia (compiled from Lefebvre 2000)

In the first column in Table 1, the number in parentheses following the district name indicates the number of communes⁴ in that district identified as having Kuy. Noteworthy in Table 1 is the fact that Lefebvre's study focused on minorities of northeastern Cambodia and did not include data collection in Kampong Thum province, which has a significant Kuy population. Therefore the total number of Kuy in Cambodia can be expected to be higher than the numbers shown here. According to Lefebvre's data, only four districts in these three provinces have a concentration of more than 10% Kuy, with the highest concentration being 40%. The other five districts listed have only 1% to 6% Kuy.

According to a 1995 study by the Administration Department of the Ministry of the Interior (Center for Advanced Study 1996), 'Kui' are the sixth largest ethnic

² Lefebvre (pc, 2004) remarks that it was difficult to collect population information for the Kuy, especially in Preah Vihear, as the official census at the time of his research did not report any Kuy in the area. The information here comes mainly from asking district leaders to give a percentage estimate of the Kuy in each district.

³ Romanized spellings of geographic names used in this thesis will follow those of the Cambodian census report (National Institute of Statistics 1998).

⁴ Politically, Cambodia is divided (in descending order) into ២៥ *khet* 'provinces', ២៧៧ *srok* 'districts', ៧៧៧ *khum* 'communes', and ៧៧៧ *phum* 'villages'.

group in Cambodia, and among the seven ethnic groups with a population of more than 10,000 (while all other groups listed have less than 4,000). The study reports 14,186 'Kui', accounting for 3.2% of the total 442,699 minority people in the country at the time. This number is slightly lower than the 15,771 reported in 1992 by the Department of Ethnic Minorities of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Center for Advanced Study 1996). In 1992, the number of Kuy was considered 5.25% of the total number of "ethnic minorities" in Cambodia, but this higher percentage (with a lower raw number) may relate to the fact that the earlier study did not include some large groups which were considered "foreign residents" (including Vietnamese, Chinese, and others); these were included as minorities in the 1995 study. It should be noted that during the author's fieldwork, it was reported that in a census some Kuy will identify themselves as Khmer; therefore official population estimates may be somewhat conservative.

In Cambodia, Kuy are mainly located in the north central provinces as follows: in most districts of Preah Vihear, many areas of northern Kampong Thum, some parts of western Stueng Traeng, and some small areas of Kracheh province. (For more detailed locations, see Section 4.1.) The map of Cambodia in Figure 6 shows these provinces shaded.

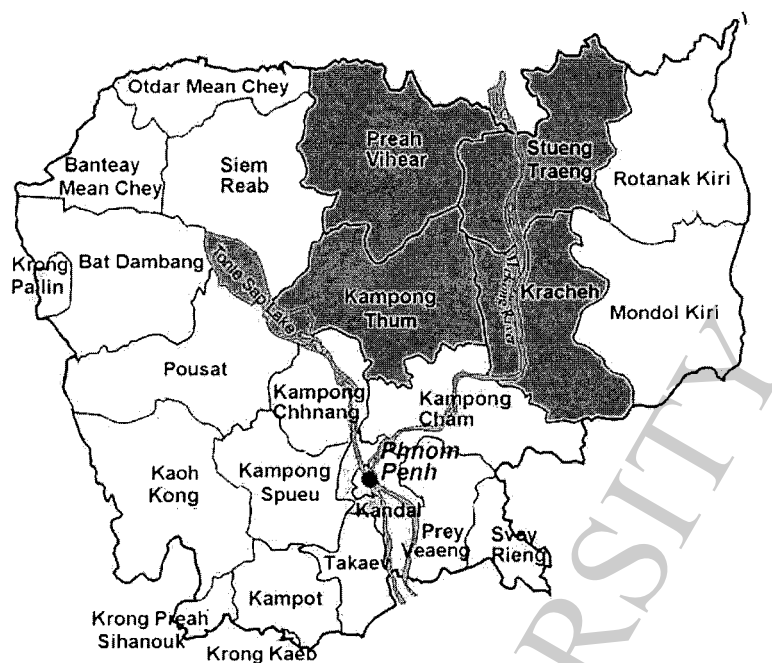


Figure 6. Provinces in Cambodia with Kuy speakers

Some reports suggest there are also some Kuy in eastern Siem Reap, but specific village information has not yet been obtained. The areas where Kuy live are mainly tropical with monsoon rains. Preah Vihear is a combination of arid plains whose continuity is disrupted by rocky mountains. Kampong Thum and Siem Reap are mostly arid plains. Kracheh and Stueng Traeng are plains with sandy soils divided by the Mekong River and its tributaries.

1.3 Literature review

The Kuy language in Thailand has been studied fairly extensively. However, in Cambodia very little recent research has been done. A few things have been published on the language in Laos, where it is usually identified as Suay. There is reportedly some research currently going on in all three countries, including comparative studies for graduate research.⁵

⁵ It came to the author's attention, after the completion of this thesis, that Preecha Sukgamsame completed his dissertation at Chulalongkorn University entitled *Phonological variation and change in Kuai-Kui (Suai)*. Preecha's study is not reviewed in the present thesis.

1.3.1 Research on Kuy in Cambodia

The only published studies found on varieties of Kuy spoken in Cambodia are rather old. Three known studies are primarily cultural descriptions, though the two written in French also include vocabulary lists.

In the earliest of these, entitled *Monographie des peuplades Kouys du Cambodge* (written in French), Dufossé (1934) describes his contact with the ‘Kouys’⁶ in 1914 while living in Stung Treang, and later in Kampong Thum. He indicates that the ‘Kouys’ subdivided themselves into five groups according to the word they used for ‘yes’: ‘Kouys Auk’, ‘Kouys Autor’, ‘Kouys Manik’, ‘Kouys Malor’, and ‘Kouys Mahay’.

Dufossé (1934:555) suggests that at the time of his research there were around 25,000 ‘Kouy’, half of them living in ‘Kg-Thom’ (Kampong Thum) and the others distributed throughout the provinces of ‘Stung-Treng’ and ‘Bassac’ (now in southern Laos). He notes that at this time, the ‘Kouys’ spoke Khmer with both the French and Khmer (though with a distinct pronunciation, allowing the last words of the sentence to be drawn out and making the intonation fall), while speaking ‘Kouy’ among themselves (Dufossé 1934:559). They were ignorant of writing, relying on tradition for their knowledge. Dufossé includes a French-‘Kouy’ lexicon of about 450 words from the ‘Kouy Auk’ dialect (collected in Rumchek and the areas surrounding Phnom Dek).⁷ A map from Dufossé (1934) is reproduced in Figure 7, showing the five ‘Kouy’ groups he identified.

⁶ The rendering of language names in this section follows the conventions of the original authors, marked in single quotes.

⁷ Due to differing notations, it is difficult to compare Dufossé’s list to the survey data in this current study.

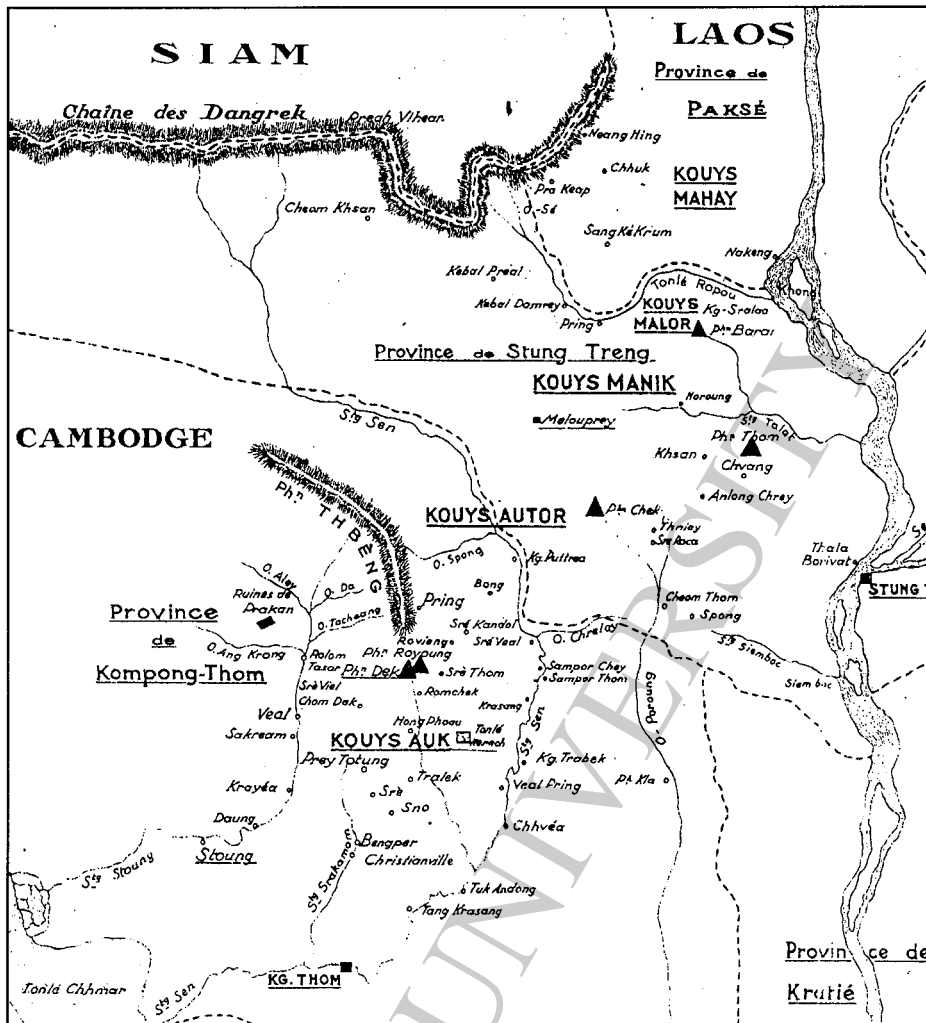


Figure 7. Map of Kuy varieties from Dufossé (1934)

Another early French work is *Recherches préhistoriques dans la région de Mlu Prei (accompagnées de comparaisons archéologiques et suivies d'un vocabulaire Français-Kuy)* by ethnologist Paul Lévy (1943). Lévy's work focuses primarily on archaeological data and physical descriptions of the 'Kuy' and their homes, with many photos (taken in the villages of Čěp, Trun and Mlu Prei). He does not give statistics, but states that at the time of his research, the majority of the population in northern 'Kompong-Thom' province was 'Kuy'.⁸

⁸ Lévy (1943) reports that in 1941, the region of Mlu Prei was attributed to Thailand. Also Preah Vihear did not become a province until more recently, so that the 'Kompong-Thom' and 'Stung Treng' of Levy's day included some of present-day Preah Vihear.

Lévy includes several valuable maps. One is taken from the work of a Dr. Harmand in 1876,⁹ which lists the following ‘Kouys’ subgroups (from north to south): ‘Kouys Mahai’, ‘Kouys Mnoh’, ‘Kouys Ntoh’, ‘Kouys Porrh’, and ‘Kouys Hah’ (or ‘Kouys dek’) (Lévy 1943:103). This is reproduced in Figure 8:

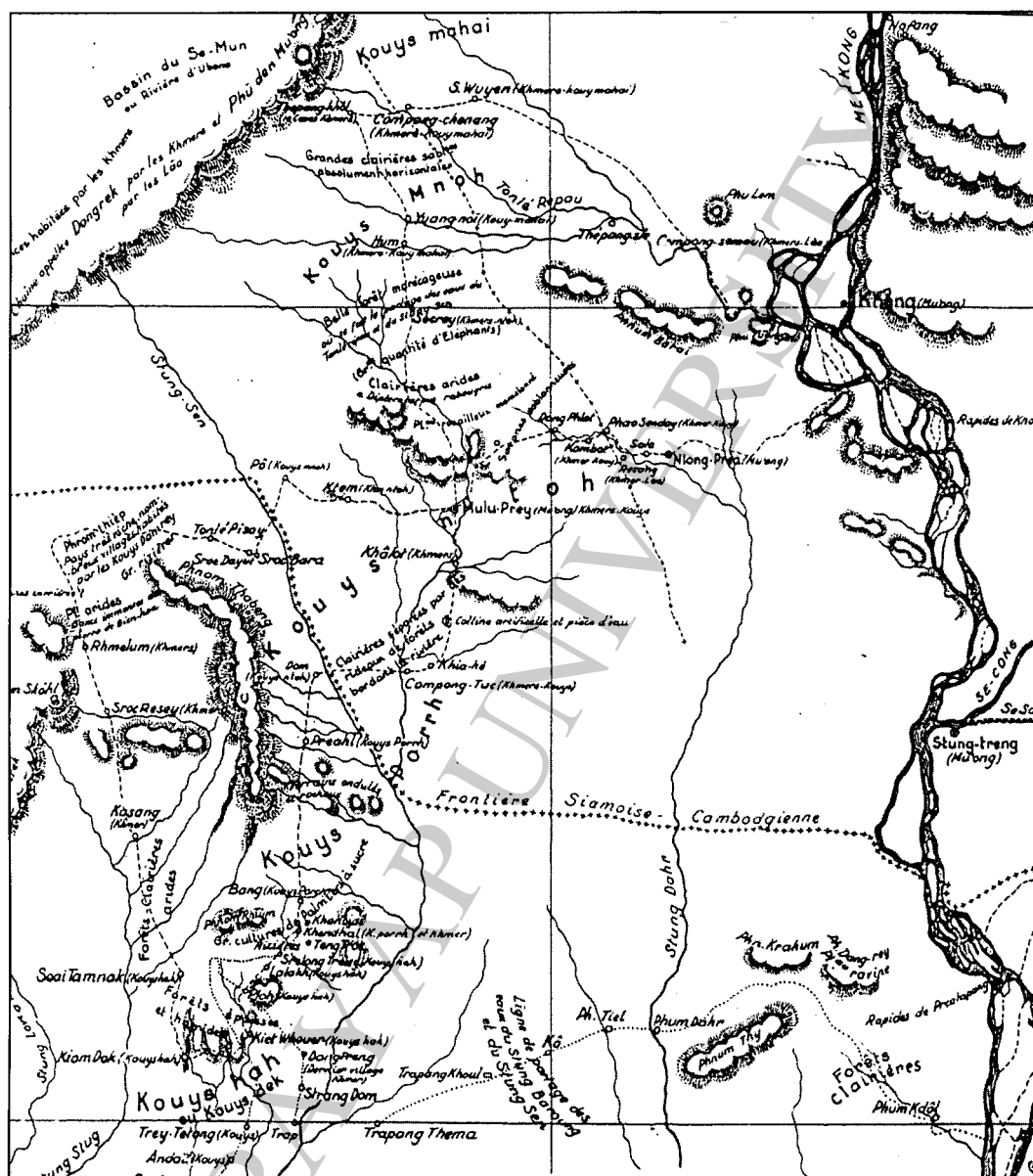


Figure 8. Map of Kuy varieties from Harmand (1876)

⁹ The author did not have access to Harmand's (1876) paper during this thesis research. The information here is taken from Lévy (1943).

A line across the lower middle of the map in Figure 8, labeled *Frontière Siamoise-Cambodgienne*, indicates the northern border of Cambodia at the time of Harmand's research. The *Tonlé Repou* river further to the top of Figure 8 follows more closely the current border between Cambodia and Laos (as seen in Figure 7).

The locations of the five subgroups identified by Harmand (Figure 8) correspond roughly to those presented by Dufossé (Figure 7), though with different names. On another map (Figure 9), Lévy gives his conception of the subdivisions of 'Küy': 'Küy Damrei', 'Küy N'lur', 'Küy Q', 'Küy N'tra', and 'Küy Kraol'.

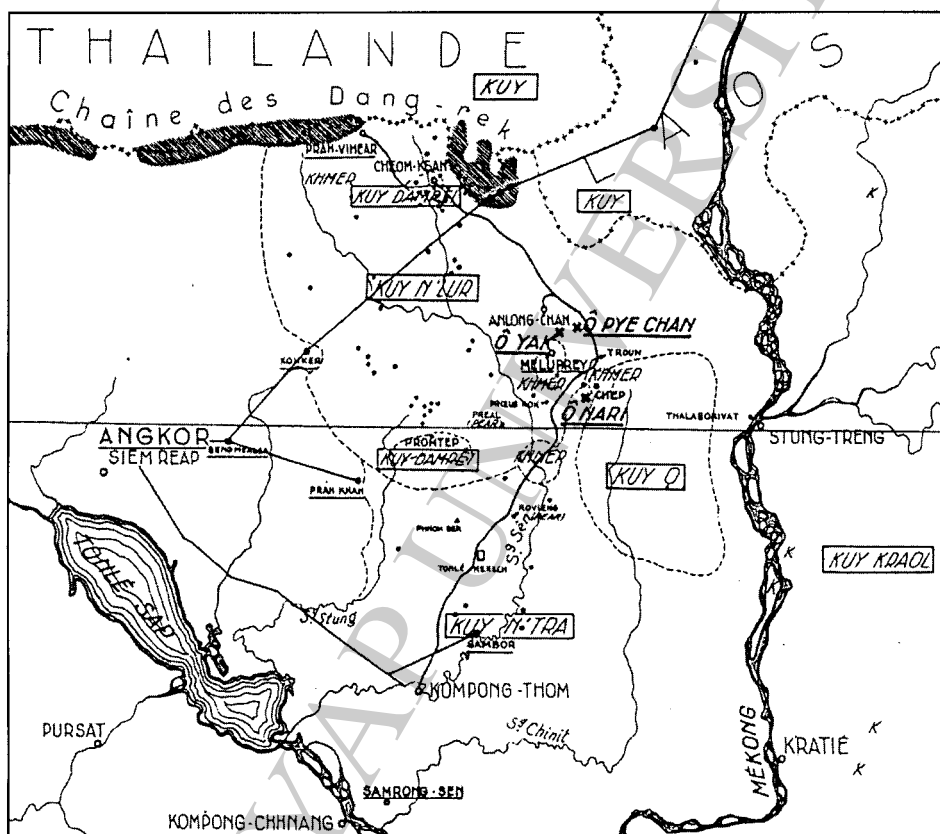


Figure 9. Map of Kuy varieties from Lévy (1943)

He then tries to reconcile these with the divisions of Harmand and Dufossé (1943:104). Lévy concludes with a list of 243 vocabulary items (words and phrases) from 'Küy Q' and 'Küy N'tra', though the author himself admits several problems with this list, including the fact that only one of his interpreters even passably knew 'Küy'.

Seidenfaden (1952), in *The Kui people of Cambodia and Siam*, includes a good English summary of much of Lévy's article. He also states that the 'Kui' are ethnically and linguistically identical to the Samré or Pörr (Péarr).¹⁰ Seidenfaden found both sides of the entire Stüing Sen river valley to be occupied by 'Kui', with few Khmer settlements (1952:145). He believed, in view of the number of ruins of Khmer sanctuaries and other discoveries, that the area was much more densely populated in former times. Seidenfaden (1952:154) summarized the various 'Kui' groups, comparing the analysis of Lévy, Harmand and Dufossé, as follows:

The *Kui* tribes, or clans, living in Cambodia along the bridle path leading from Kampong Thom northward to Chom Ksan and Phra Vihar are, according to M. Lévy's modern map, the *Kui N'tra*, *Kui Damrei* and *Kui Ô* and again *Kui Damrei* and *Kui N'lur*... The tribal names given by the two doctor-explorers [Harmand and Dufossé] differ from M. Lévy's whose *Kui N'lur* seem to be identical with their *Mnoh* and *Malor*, while the doctors' *Kui Hah* or *Dek*, *Ntoh*, *Auk* and *Autor* should be the same as M. Lévy's *Kui Ô* and *N'tra*. The name *Manik* is unknown to us but there are *Kui Mahay* or *M'ai* to the north of the Dong Rek range too.

In comparing Levy's (1943) vocabulary list of 'Kui N'tra' and 'Ô' to his own list from 'Kui M'loa' of Sisaket in Thailand, Seidenfaden notes that "the words therein contained differ only slightly from those in our list" (1952:155).¹¹

The second half of Seidenfaden's paper focuses on his own research among the 'Kui' of 'Siam', or Thailand (as observed during the years 1908 to 1919, though the paper was not published until 1952). One particularly interesting comment is that extensive intermingling between the 'Kui' and the Thai or Khmer (in Thailand), "has led very much to the denationalization of the Kui who, in contrast to their countrymen in Cambodia, do not respect their own language or customs" (1952:159), and he predicted that 'Kui' in 'Siam' would, in a generation or two, die out. At the time, he noted four main groups in Thailand: 'Kui M'ai', 'Kui M'lô', 'Kui Yö' and 'Kui M'loa'. He does not comment about how these

¹⁰ However, Dufossé (1934) describes the 'Pohrs' as a separate language group, and informal data collected in March 2002 by the present author also show Por to be very different from Kuy. The Kuy interviewed in 2002 and 2003 said they cannot communicate with Por speakers. Note that 'Suoy' (which may be confused with 'Souei' or 'Suay') is a Pearic language of Cambodia closely related to Samre and Pear.

¹¹ Due to differing notations, it is difficult to compare Levy's list to the survey data in this current study.

divisions compare to those in Cambodia, except for saying that the ‘Kui Yö’ dialect “resembles that of the ‘Kui Ô’ and ‘N’tra’ at Mlu Prei but with some important differences” (1952:168). He gives very detailed descriptions and population numbers for each *amphoe* ‘district’ in Thailand.

1.3.2 Research on Kuy in Thailand

As mentioned previously, the majority of the Kuy are located in Thailand, and the locations of speakers are more easily accessible there than in Laos or Cambodia. Consequently, a large portion of the published materials on Kuy refer to speakers in Thailand. Publications relating to language survey research will be discussed first, followed by other materials on Kuy in Thailand.

1.3.2.1 Survey research

In Thailand, at least three linguistic surveys have been completed and documented. The first, by William Smalley (1964), is an *Ethnolinguistic survey of Northern Khmer speaking people in Northeast Thailand (with data on Kuy)*. The purpose of the survey was to determine strategy for language development, including a study of multilingualism in the area and the feasibility of writing Northern Khmer in Thai script. The paper gives a helpful description of the hierarchy of multilingualism found in Thailand, as well as education and language learning information. The author also presents several photos and detailed maps of the distribution of Kuy speaking people among other groups in Thailand. In comparison to Seidenfaden’s maps, Smalley noted that the Kuy areas were considerably smaller by this time, with Kuy speakers having assimilated to Khmer and to Lao (1964:21). He suggests this assimilation process is also evident in Cambodia and Laos due to the isolated pockets of Kuy speakers found in different areas.

The second major survey, *Kui dialect survey in Surin and Sisaket*, was carried out by Feikje Van der Haak and Brigitte Woykos (1990). This involved the collection of 73 diagnostic words and phrases designed to bring out the phonological and

lexical differences between the various dialects in Surin and Sisaket. A total of 53 wordlists were collected, with additional information from 61 other villages. The results (Van der Haak and Woykos 1990:111) show dialects fitting roughly into two main groups, 'Kuuy' and 'Kuay', with many subdialects. The researchers, having lived in a 'Kui' village, could communicate in 'Kui' with speakers of all but three of the subdialects. Based on the number of villages, the following population estimates were made: Surin Province – 58,800 'Kuay' and 68,460 'Kuuy'; and Sisaket Province – 32,130 'Kuay' and 61,530 'Kuuy' for a total of 220,920 'Kui' speakers in these two provinces of Thailand.¹²

The third survey was conducted by Wanna Tienmee (1994) and published in Thai as การกระจายของภาษากูยในประเทศไทย (*The distribution of Kuy dialects in Thailand*). This study, which includes data from the Van der Haak and Woykos survey, locates areas in Thailand where Kuy is spoken, compares the phonological characteristics of various dialects, shows the location of these dialects by *amphoe* 'district' in each province, and classifies the dialects into subgroups.

1.3.2.2 Other Materials

In addition to the surveys already discussed, there are a number of other publications on Kuy as spoken in Thailand. A foundational work is the *Kui (Suai)-Thai-English Dictionary*, compiled by Prasert Sriwises (1978), produced by the Indigenous Languages of Thailand Research Project at Chulalongkorn University. The introduction gives background information on the location of 'Kui' speakers in Thailand, a detailed description of the phonological system of the Ban Tael variety of 'Kui' used as a basis for the dictionary, and a section on dialectal variations. 'Kui' dictionary entries are written both phonetically and in Thai transcription, and definitions are given in Thai and English.

¹² These estimates were reached as follows: the total number of all Kuuy and Kuay villages were counted, with mixed villages (Kui/Lao or Kui/Khmer) counted as half a village. An average village was assumed to consist of 70 houses and one household to consist of 6 people.

Richard Johnston, who along with his wife lived and worked among the Kui of Thailand for many years, published a *Kuy basic word list* in *Mon-Khmer Studies* in 1969. His wife, Beulah, gives a phonological description of Kuy (found in Smalley, 1976), while presenting a writing system for Kuy based on Thai characters.

Many graduate students in Thailand have completed MA theses on Kuy. One comparative study is *The phonology of the Kuay language of Suphanburi with comparison to the Kuy language of Surin* by Pailin Yantreesingh (1980). This gives a phonological description of each variety followed by a comparison of the two, with examples and charts.

Jerry Gainey (1985) wrote a thesis on *A comparative study of Kui, Bruu and So phonology from a genetic point of view*. A phonological description of each language is given, followed by a comparison of phonological inventories and distribution. The 'Kui' data for this study is taken from Prasert's dictionary.

Another thesis, by Preecha Sukgasame (1988), focuses on *Phonological interference between Kuay and Northeastern Thai in Surin*. This work is a contrastive analysis between these two languages (which are intermingled in this province), and considers communication interference (intonation, vowel, consonant and pitch) in bilingual speakers.

A grammatical description can be found in *Phrases to sentences in Kuay (Surin)*, by Oranuch Sa-ard (1984). This thesis considers noun phrases, verb phrases, clauses and sentences using the tagmemic concepts of slot and fillers. Another grammatical thesis is *A comparative study of the morphological processes of Kui, Bruu and So* by Ekawit Chinowat (1983).

Several brief articles have been written by other Thai researchers. Theraphan Thongkum (1989) has done *An acoustic study of the register complex in Kui (Suai)*, as well as some other works about phonation in Mon-Khmer languages in

general. Preecha Sukgasame (1993) has written *Correlates of the register complex in Kuay*. These two articles on register are discussed further in Section 4.4.

Somsong Burusphat published two discourse studies, *The functions of kʌʔ in oral Kui narrative* (1992) and *Kui narrative repetition* (1993). Somsong (1994) also compiled language lessons, *เรียนภาษาและชีวิตความเป็นอยู่ของชาวภูย-กวย (ส่วย) จากบทสนทนา (Conversational Lessons of Kuy-Kuay (Suay) Language and Way of Life)*, through the Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development at Mahidol University. Interlinearization of phrases in each conversational lesson includes phonetic transcription, both in IPA and Thai script, followed by word-for-word and free translations in Thai. A Thai-Kui glossary is included in the back.

Ilia Peiros (1996) has compiled a *Katuic comparative dictionary*. Using language data from published dictionaries in four Katuic languages (Bru, Kui, Pakoh and Katu), Peiros establishes phonological comparisons and proposes a phonological reconstruction of Proto-Katuic. The ‘Kui’ data is taken from the dictionary compiled by Prasert (1978).

1.3.3 Research on Kuy (Suay) in Laos

As discussed previously, Kuy spoken in Laos is more commonly known as Suay (also spelled Suai). Chazée (1999:84) states that the “Suay have been assimilated to the Lao Loum for a long time, whose religion, ceremonies, language, habitat and production technique have been taken over. Only isolated villages speak ... Suay [in] ... daily life.”

Ferlus (1974) published *Lexique Souei-Français* based on the ‘Souei’ of Saravan province. At the time of his writing, this group numbered around 10,000. Ferlus (1974:141) states that this ‘Souei’ is Katuic and is close to the Kuy of northern Cambodia.

Recently a significant linguistic work has been published in Thai using data from Katuic and Bahnaric languages in southern Laos (Theraphan 2001), titled ภาษาของ นานาชนเผ่าในแขวงเซกอง ลาวใต้: ความรู้พื้นฐานเพื่อการวิจัยและพัฒนา (*Languages of the tribes in Xekong Province, Southern Laos: A foundation for research and development*). This publication gives a phonological reconstruction of Proto-Katuic. The Suay data collected during the research for this work is actually a Bahnaric language with the same name (sometimes written ‘Souei’ or ‘Suai’; see Theraphan 2001 for comparative evidence). The Katuic Suay data used in Theraphan’s study is from Ferlus (1974), and data from Kui in Thailand is also used.

1.4 Data collection

This section gives general background on the data that was collected for the thesis and describes how it was collected. More specific details on selection of items for lexicostatistical comparison and the selection of wordlists for comparative phonological reconstruction will be given in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, respectively. The collection of stories and questions for recorded text testing will be described in Chapter 6.

1.4.1 Site selection

Three separate research trips to Kuy-speaking areas in Cambodia were made, in March 2002, June 2003, and December 2003. More than twenty sites were visited during these trips. Wordlists were collected in twelve villages. Selection of these sites was determined by studying past research, meeting with provincial authorities and other researchers working in the area, and gathering information from Kuy speakers (especially from Sections 3 and 5c of the sociolinguistic questionnaire; see Appendix A). A list of all villages in Cambodia reported to have Kuy speakers is given in Appendix B.

An attempt was made to collect wordlists in all locations where there is a distinctive variety. When the same variety was reported to be spoken over a large

area, wordlists were collected in several villages, spread throughout the area, in an attempt to identify possible variations within the variety. The twelve sites where wordlists were collected are shown in Table 2. It should be noted that in Krala Peas, Thmei and Chranaol, Kuy is spoken only by older villagers. (See Section 2.3 for further discussion.)

Province	District	Commune	Village	Population ¹³
Kampong Thum	Prasat Balangk	Sala Visai	Srae	798
Kampong Thum	Prasat Balangk	Sala Visai	Tralaek	807
Kracheh	Kracheh	Thmei	Chranaol	692
Kracheh	Kracheh	Thmei	Thmei	900
Preah Vihear	Choam Khsant	Pring Thum	Krala Peas	743
Preah Vihear	Rovieng	Reaksa	Samraong	241
Preah Vihear	Rovieng	Romony	Rumchek	800
Preah Vihear	Rovieng	Romony	Chi Aok	660
Preah Vihear	Rovieng	Romtom	Svay Damnak ¹⁴	539
Preah Vihear	Tbaeng Mean Chey	Pal Hal	Pal Hal	639
Preah Vihear	Tbaeng Mean Chey	Prame	Prame	619
Preah Vihear	Tbaeng Mean Chey	Preah Khleang	Anlong Svay	671

Table 2. Wordlist collection sites

A map of these locations is shown in Figure 10.

¹³ Taken from *General population census of Cambodia* (National Institute of Statistics 1998).

¹⁴ Svay Damnak is now politically separated into two villages, Svay Damnak Chas (“old”) and Svay Damnak Thmei (“new”). The wordlist was collected in Svay Damnak Chas, and the population figure of 539 reflects only this older portion. Since the villages are close enough to appear to be a single village, the location of this wordlist will be referred to in this thesis by the shorter name, Svay Damnak.

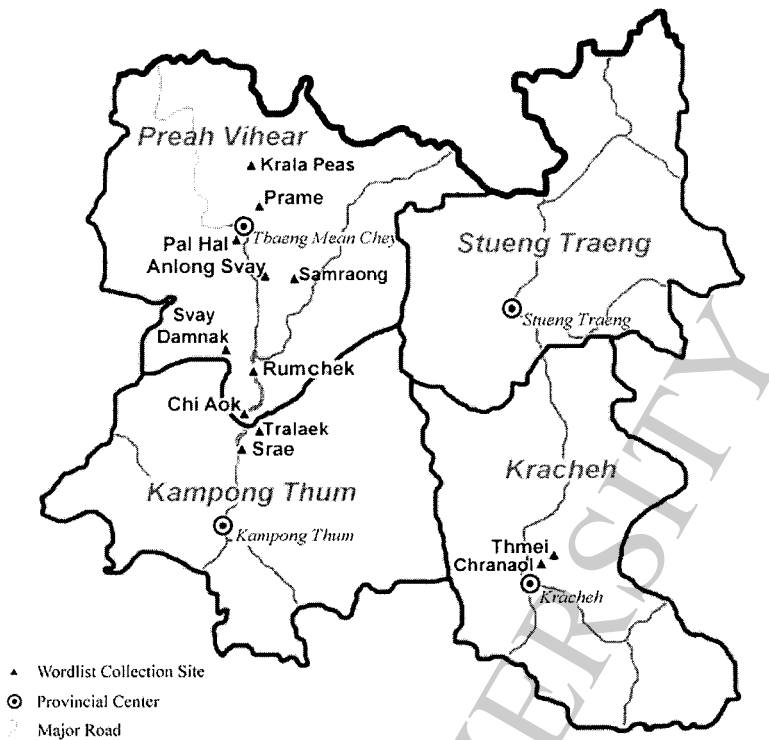


Figure 10. Map of wordlist collection sites

The largest number of wordlists were collected in Preah Vihear province, since this province has the highest concentration of Kuy speakers. It would have been preferable to also collect at least one wordlist in Stueng Traeng province, but accessibility was limited, and reports suggest that Kuy may no longer be spoken in most areas.

1.4.2 Wordlist development

The wordlist used for this study underwent several revisions. The final list can be found in Appendix E. The first list used, during the March 2002 and June 2003 trips, was originally adapted from the SIL Mainland Southeast Asia (MSEA) 436-item wordlist, which was based on the SIL MSEA 281-item wordlist. This earlier

281-item wordlist included most of the Swadesh 100 and 200 wordlist items,¹⁵ with additional words that were considered to be of local relevance. For the present study, the SIL MSEA 436-item wordlist was adjusted to 472 words with regard to known information about Kuy, such that words which would elicit duplicate items were eliminated, while some words were added to match existing Kuy wordlists (from varieties in Thailand) and the Miller and Miller (2001) Katuic diagnostic wordlist. This new 472-item wordlist was translated into Khmer and used on the first two trips. Once a site was identified as being similar to another site where a full wordlist was collected, then only a portion of the wordlist (basically the original 281-item wordlist, with some changes) was elicited. This is because only one location from each different type of Kuy would be used for comparative phonological reconstruction. For lexicostatistical comparison, 100 words were chosen from the 281-item wordlist collected in all twelve locations. The list of 100 words can be found in Appendix D. (Section 3.1 describes the selection of these 100 words.)

When considering comparative phonological reconstruction, a fuller wordlist was sought, to provide sufficient examples of correspondence sets for all phonemes. Therefore, on the third trip (in December 2003) an extra 100 items were added. These additional 100 items were based on wordlists for other comparative works in related languages (Smith 1972, Sidwell 2000 and Peiros 1996). This change was an attempt to add words, based on cognates with related languages, which would elicit phonemes for which there were few examples in the data collected earlier, such as /ɲ/ and /ŋ/. In addition, a few other items which were not originally on the wordlist were added in the course of elicitation, particularly when two Kuy forms were given for a single Khmer gloss (or two Khmer and Kuy forms were given for a single English gloss). Items too difficult to elicit had to be

¹⁵ Swadesh (1955:133-7) lists 215 words used by Robert Lees in a pilot study on lexicostatistic dating. Fifteen of these words were found unsuitable, thus producing a 200-item list. After identifying problems with many other items, Swadesh proposed the 100-item list, including 92 of the original items, plus eight new items (1955:124).

eliminated. The total number of items on the final list is 566, as reflected in Appendix E.

In the process of collecting a wordlist, the head of a village was asked to provide a fluent mother-tongue Kuy speaker with clear pronunciation, who was a long-term resident of the village, usually a middle-aged male. In most cases, a group of speakers was available throughout the elicitation session, to assist the main speaker with identifying the most appropriate Kuy word from that particular village. This collaboration was especially helpful in Krala Peas, Thmei and Chranaol, where speakers sometimes had difficulty remembering the Kuy words, as Khmer is used more often in daily conversation.

Each wordlist was recorded using a mini-disk recorder. For the longer wordlists used for phonological reconstruction, an attempt was made to elicit the lists twice, from different speakers, with questions asked to clarify items where more than one word form was elicited.

1.5 Overview of the thesis

In order to determine how many varieties of Kuy are spoken in Cambodia and the relationships between them, four different approaches are used in this study; these include sociolinguistic considerations, lexicostatistics, comparative phonological reconstruction and comprehension testing. Each of these approaches is expected to confirm the findings of the others and thus provide a stronger case for the conclusions presented. Detailed methodology for each of the analyses used will be presented in the respective chapters.

This first chapter has presented the background on the Kuy language and people, a review of relevant literature, an overview of the methodologies to be applied in the following chapters, and a description of the data collection procedures. Chapter 2 gives a summary of sociolinguistic background information as collected from Kuy speakers, particularly in relation to dialect names, locations of speakers, and language use. Chapter 3 presents a lexicostatistical comparison of the twelve

wordlists collected, with an analysis of dialect groupings. A phonological overview for each of the main dialect groupings of Kuy is provided in Chapter 4. A comparative phonological reconstruction based on four select wordlists is given in Chapter 5, including sound change rules. Comprehension testing between the two most viable varieties is presented in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, combining the results of the four areas of analysis, and giving suggestions for application and further research.

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