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**A Description of Jruq (Loven):
a Mon-Khmer language of the Lao PDR**

Pascale Jacq

Submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy

Australian National University

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A candidate for the degree of
a non-ferrous language of the Lao PDR

PHILIP BOND

Submitted in the Faculty of Letters of Trinity

Australian National University

1988

I declare this thesis to be my own work and all sources used have been acknowledged.



ABSTRACT

This thesis is a description of Jruq, a Mon-Khmer language of mainland Southeast Asia. It is a minority language spoken in the Champassak, Attapeu and Saravane provinces of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The investigation is based predominantly on the data I collected during four intensive fieldwork trips between 1997 and 2000.

Jruq has not been studied thoroughly by linguists, and as a result there is very little literature available on it, mostly some wordlists, some very basic grammatical information and a small amount of text. This thesis is an attempt at a more complete and systematic description, within the limits of a Masters thesis. The range of topics covered include phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax. Special attention is given to some particular features of Jruq which are typologically unusual, or otherwise noteworthy, these include:

- the phonation-type distinctions among initial consonants (this is treated as a phonological rather than phonetic distinction)
- the distinction of active rather than passive articulators in determining the major places of consonant articulation,
- word and syllable structure, and my proposal to treat the phonological word as basically monosyllabic,
- the interesting system of prefixation which is now no longer productive, and has been partly obscured by phonological changes to the language,
- the complex Tense, Aspect and Mood system unusual for other Mon-Khmer languages,
- the indigenous 'Khom' script, previously not described in detail in the literature.

Chapter 1 is a basic introduction to the Jruq language and speakers, describing Jruq's broad linguistic affiliation and an ethnographic account of the Jruq as a distinct language community.

Chapter 2 is a detailed description of the sounds of Jruq. Of particular interest are the phonetic distinctions between laryngeal settings for all consonants. I provide spectrographic and instrumental analyses of my field recordings to illustrate these sounds. Chapter 3 is a phonological treatment of the sounds

discussed in Chapter 2. An analysis of word and syllable structure is given which best accounts for the highly restricted segments in particular positions of the word.

Chapter 4 examines the natural word classes in Jruq determined by syntactic criteria. Chapter 5 describes Jruq phrase types which are explained using Phrase structure rules and illustrated with Tree diagrams. Chapter 6 describes the Sentence types of Jruq which are determined by sentence-level intonation patterns (plus the use of various Particles).

The thesis also includes various appendices. Appendix I is a lexicon of 1500 Jruq words I recorded. These are sorted by initial consonant and I have included phonetic transcriptions of their pronunciation as I heard them. Appendix II is a brief description of the 'Khom' (Kommadam) script which was devised by the Jruq King, Ong Kommadam in the 1930's. Appendix III comprises five glossed and translated Jruq texts. These include a monologue by Mr. Lin about his experiences during the US bombing of Paksong in 1971; a recipe for making 'Sukiyaki' by Miss Toi; a description of the traditional Jruq 'welcoming ceremony', by Mr. Ching; the 'Bulbul' song by Miss Toi and myself; and a short description by Mr. Lin of Jruq burial practices.

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This thesis is a culmination of research conducted on and off over the past 4 years at the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne. The completion of this research project would not have been possible in the short run without the Masters Research Scholarship and financial support for fieldwork which I received at the A.N.U., in addition to the help given by my family and Paul Sidwell in funding and preparing my fieldtrips (thanks also Nick Enfield for help transferring money to Laos).

Looking back I am rather embarrassed to admit that in 1997 when looking for a topic to investigate for Masters at the University of Melbourne, I did not even know where the Lao P.D.R. was on the world map! I had never heard of 'exotic' languages such as Jruq or Bahnar, nor the language families 'Bahnaric' or 'Mon-Khmer' for that matter. I had never learnt a language of Asia. Within a short period of time, I learnt much about the classification and whereabouts of these languages from Paul Sidwell (who at that time was completing his PhD on the reconstruction of Proto-Bahnaric lexicon). I also learnt the basics of Laotian from Nick Enfield (also completing a PhD at University of Melbourne) and my Lao teacher Sornsuda Souvannavong at the Victorian Lao School (Forest Hill). This enabled me to begin eliciting data from informants in the Lao PDR at the end of 1997.

I eventually withdrew from the Masters course at The University of Melbourne after many stops and starts because I could not work fulltime to fund my fieldtrips as well as write a thesis. In March 1999, I enrolled in Masters at the Australian National University and was awarded a full-time scholarship and fieldwork support. I thank my Supervisor Dr Avery Andrews who has given me many words of advise and has commented on earlier drafts of my thesis. Also thanks are due to my Advisors, Dr. Tony Diller who offered some of his knowledge of Laotian/Thai, and Dr Harold Koch who gave me valuable feedback and suggested corrections to my final draft—any errors in the final product are mine and mine alone. Other specialist Linguists, Anthropologists and botanists who work on the area, have kindly offered much expertise, suggestions, and even their unpublished work! In particular Michel Ferlus, Barbara Wall, Geoffrey Gunn, Paul Sidwell, Hubert Bähler.

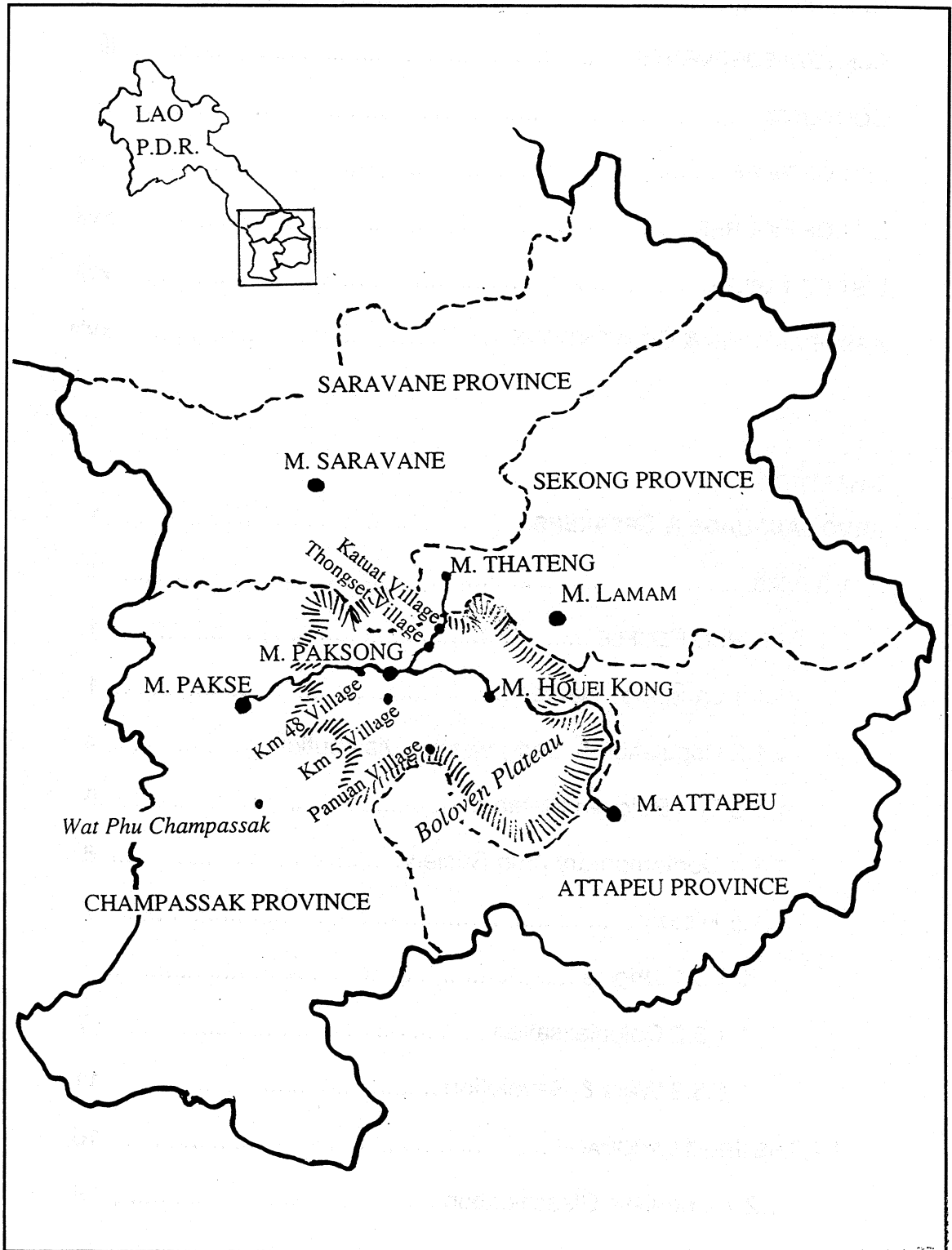
Over the ensuing years I have managed to build a network of wonderful friends and contacts to whom I am very thankful for teaching me about the culture, languages and general knowledge of the region. Some, like my best friends and main informants Miss Toi and Mr. Lin, have devoted much of their time in teaching me about Jruq. Thankfully, they too have a passion for linguistics, and they often insist that they enjoyed teaching me the Jruq language just as much as I did! Other people I may have only met for ten minutes in the field but they have helped me navigate the wild rivers and forest tracks of the region, warned me of the dangers (such as unexploded ordinance or river perch with a taste for foreign flesh!), or who may have introduced me to a valuable contact. Outside of Laos, many people have helped me in various ways—some people in cyberspace I have not yet met but have offered some expert advice. I am well aware that during my fieldwork and the writing up of my thesis, my safety, sanity and my astounding good luck was very much in the hands of the following family members, friends, colleagues, and officials (in alphabetical order of first names)—

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MAP 2: MAP OF SOUTHERN LAO P.D.R.



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ABBREVIATIONS & CONVENTIONS

∅	ellipsed syntactic element	C ₂	Obligatory Onset Consonant
//	phonemic representation	C ₃	Coda (Word final) Consonant
[]	phonetic representation	Class.	Classifier
()	optional element	conj.	Conjunction
*	in §2 represents reconstructed form	Dem.	Demonstrative
*	elsewhere represents ungrammatical or unacceptable construction	Desc.	Descriptive
		EXCL	Exclamatory Particle
		F ₁	First Formant
		F ₂	Second Formant
1sg.	First person singular Pronoun <i>ʔaj</i>	F ₀	Fundamental Frequency
1pl.	First person plural Pronoun <i>ŋaj</i>	FOC.	Focus Particle
2sg.	Second person singular Pronoun <i>saw</i>	FUT.	Future Tense
2pl.	Second person plural Pronoun <i>pɛ</i>	-FUT.	Non-Future Tense
3sg.	Third person singular Pronoun <i>kiak</i>	HZ	Hertz
3P.	Third person generic Pronoun <i>hǎn</i>	INDEF.NUM.	Indefinite Number
3pl.	Third person plural Pronoun <i>cɔp</i>	interrog.	Interrogative
		MK	Mon-Khmer
		N	Noun
		NEG.	Negative Auxiliary <i>ʔih</i>
		NP	Noun Phrase
Adj.	Adjective	Num.	Numeral
Adv.	Adverb	NUM.INTER.	Numeral Interrogative <i>sieʔ</i>
Aux.	Auxiliary	NUM.MOD.	Numeral Modifier
C	Consonant	PP	Prepositional Phrase
C ₁	Word initial (voiceless) consonant (before C ₂)	Prep.	Preposition
		Pron.	Pronoun

CONTENTS

PTCL.	Particle		represents Verbs
PWB	Proto-West Bahnaric	V _{comp.}	Complement-taking Verb
Q	Polar Question Particle	V _{ditr.}	Ditransitive Verb
Quant.	Quantifier	V _{intr.}	Intransitive Verb
QP	Quantifier Phrase	V _{semitr.}	Semitransitive Verb
QP(temp.)	Temporal Quantifier Phrase	V _{tr.}	Transitive Verb
R	Rhotic or Lateral after C ₂	VP	Verb Phrase
REQ.	Request Particle	VP _(benefact.)	Benefactive Verb Phrase (in SVP)
S	Clause/Sentence	VP _(cause)	Causative Verb Phrase (in SVP)
S _{rel}	Relative Clause	VP _(direct.)	Directional Verb Phrase (in SVP)
SVP	Serial Verb Construction	VP _(instrum.)	Instrumental Verb Phrase (in SVP)
TP	Temporal Phrase	VP _(main)	Main Verb Phrase (in SVP)
TP _{quant.}	Quantified Temporal Phrase	VP _(purpose)	Purposive Verb Phrase (in SVP)
Temp.adv	Temporal Adverb	W	word
Temp.desc.	Temporal Descriptive	WB	West Bahnaric
Temp.N	Temporal Noun	WH	information question
Temp.Num.	Temporal Numeral	WH.UNKNOWN	Information question (unknown referent)
V	in §3 represents Vowels		
V	elsewhere		

Where X stands for any Phrase or Phrasal head:

X _{adv.}	X in adverbial function
X _{attrib.}	X in attributive function
X _{cpd.}	X with a compound word structure
X _{pred.}	X in predicative function
X _{simp.}	X with a simple Phrase structure
X _{complex}	X with a complex Phrase structure

