

Common etymologies in Koreanic and Tai languages: Sinitic, Turkic and onomatopoeic Chingduang Yurayong (University of Helsinki)

This paper is a piloting study on Korean(ic) and T(h)ai lexical items, suspected to share common etymologies. The comparison takes Tai languages into the consideration of language contacts of Korean. By all means, the approach is purely contact-based with no implication of genealogical relationship between the languages under investigation. Besides its contribution to Korean historical linguistics and language contacts, the current study can turn to good account of language teaching and learning: Teaching Korean for Thai and Lao speakers and vice versa. That is, awareness of common etymologies, found in their own mother tongue, will facilitate the language learners in understanding and memorising foreign vocabularies.

The focus is on more common vocabularies that the learners of Korean encounter on a daily basis. Data are preliminarily collected from *Collins Pocket Korean Dictionary* (2012), which is supplemented by Ramstedt's *Studies in Korean Etymologies* (1949) and other recent studies on individual etymons, such as Martin (1966), Unger (1980) and Vovin (2014, 2015). The process starts by gathering lexical pairs, which show phonological similarities between Korean and Thai. Then, the etymological connections are investigated. The criteria are based on the sets of consistent sound correspondences, much in the light of a great number of common Sinitic loanwords. By tracking emergence of sound changes in different languages compared (e.g. Pittayaporn 2014), dating relative chronology of borrowing becomes possible.

The result suggests a hundred of candidates for common etymologies between Korean and Thai. According to their potential origins, they are grouped into:

(1) **Sinitic origins**, 100–120 items (including various language forms of Sinitic), for example:

- Numeral system 1–10000, e.g. 만 ~ Thai หมื่น *mu:n*^{B1} ‘ten thousand’
- Late Han Chinese *ŋa ziaŋ*^B → 상아 ~ Thai งาช้าง *ŋa:A2 cha:ŋ*^{C2} ‘ivory’
- Late Han Chinese *ka*^C → 가(격) ~ Thai ค่า *kʰa*^{B2} ‘price, value’

(2) **Turkic origins**, 5–10 items, for example:

- **baq* ‘gourd’ → (호)박 ~ Thai ฟัก *fak*^{D2} ‘squash’
- **sai* ‘channel, groove, gap’ → 사|오 ~ Thai ไส้ *sai*^{C1} ‘core, nucleus; intestine’
- **sa-t* ‘to make one buy’ → 사다 ~ Thai ซื้อ *su*^{C2} ‘to buy’

(3) **Onomatopoeic origins**, 3–5 items, for examples:

- 죽죽하다 ~ Thai ใส่น้ำ *cho:k*^{D2} ‘to be soaked’
- 잡다 ~ Thai จับ *cap*^{D1} ‘to hold, catch’ (~ Manchu *jafa-* ‘to grasp, hold’)
- 숨다 ~ Thai ซ่อน *sum*^{B2} ‘to hide, conceal oneself’ (~ Tungusic **sumε-t-* [id.])

(4) **Uncertain/unknown origins**, 10–15 items, for examples:

- 쌀 ~ Thai (ข้าว)สาร (*kʰa:w*^{C1})*sa:n*^{A1} [orthographically spelt <sa:r>] ‘milled, uncooked rice’
(~ Eastern Turk dialect *šali* ‘rice in the shell’)
- 되다 (< **tog-i-*) ~ Thai ตก *tok*^{D1} ‘to drop, fall; give birth’
(~ Uighur *tuy-* ‘to be born, appear’; Mongol *tu(g)urbi-* ‘to compose’)
- 치다 (< **thi-ji-*) ~ Thai ตี *ti*^{A1} ‘to hit, beat, strike, attack’ (~ Tungusic **tije-* ‘to beat’)

Needless to say, the investigation is still in need of broader data, both supporting and falsifying examples from other languages possibly involving in the contact situations. The ultimate goal is to provide interesting linguistic evidence on the early history of Koreanic and Tai speakers. The question of possible Koreano-Tai contact relationship, prior to migration towards their current locations in Korean peninsula and Indo-China, is also worth discussing.

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