



Mondzish: a new branch of Lolo-Burmese

Andrew Hsiu 修至誠

Center for Research in Computational Linguistics (CRCL)
Bangkok, Thailand

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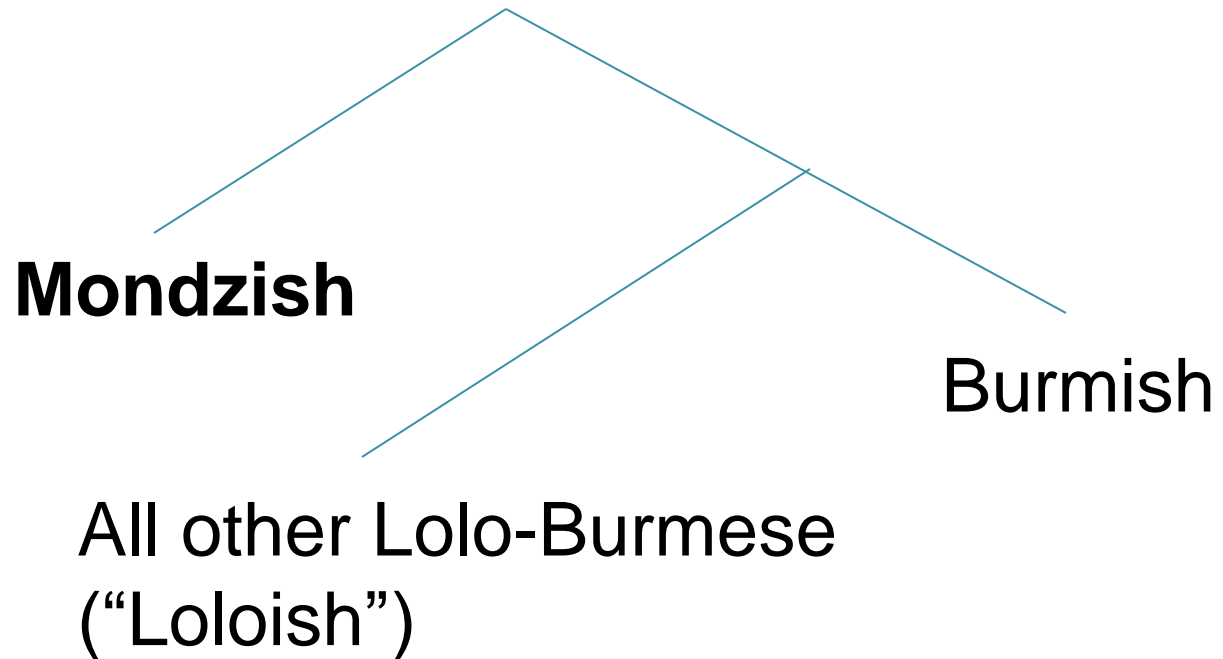
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Why Mondzish?

- **Divergent** branch of Lolo-Burmese
- **Archaic consonant clusters** in one of its languages, Kathu ~ Thou
- **Maza** has many Kra (Tai-Kadai branch) basic vocab words.
- Highly **underdocumented** and little-known; mostly short word lists
- **Critically endangered** languages with <50 speakers: Mango, Maza, etc.

Lolo-Burmese classification: Ziwo Lama (2012)

Nisoic / Lolo-Burmese / Ngwi



Lolo-Burmese classification: David Bradley

Burmic (aka Lolo-Burmese)

- Burmish
- Ngwi (aka Loloish)
 - Northern Ngwi
 - Central Ngwi
 - Southern Ngwi (= Lama's Hanoish)
 - Southeastern Ngwi

I will use Matisoff's Lolo-Burmese to avoid confusion; I have found that most ethnic Yi in China do not find "Lolo" to be pejorative, and often use it to refer to themselves.

Lolo-Burmese classification

- The existence of “Mondzish” does not contradict Bradley’s model.
- If fit into Bradley’s model: 3 groups within Burmic (Lolo-Burmese)
 1. Mondzish
 2. Burmish
 3. Loloish = Ngwi

Language names

- Thou θou^{53}
- Kathu $ka^{33}\theta u^{33}$
- Muangphe $mu a\eta^{53}, mu a\eta^{55}phe^{21}$
- Mango $ma^{55}\eta o^{21}$
- Manga $ma^{33}\eta a^{33}$
- Maza $ma^{33}za^{53}$
- Meang $mæ a\eta^{53}$
- Maang $ma a\eta^{33}$
- Monji [Mondzi] $mo^{21}ndzi^{21}$
- Munji $mu^{53}ndzi^{21}$
- Mantsi $mã^{53}tsi^{53}$
- Mandzi $ma ndzi$
- Maji $ma^{21}dzi^{21}$

Unique languages

1. Kathu/Thou cluster
2. Munji/Mantsi cluster
3. Meang/Maang cluster
4. Mango/Manga cluster
5. Muangphe
6. Maza



Map: relative locations



Homeland: central Yunnan

- Likely homeland around Kunming, central Yunnan
- Also proposed Lolo-Burmese homeland (Ilia Peiros)
- Historical records indicate the Phula have migrated from Kunming to Wenshan (Jamin Pelkey 2011).
- Munji legends also claim origin from Wuhua Mountain, Kunming (own field notes).

Mondzish lexical innovations

- Sometimes closer to Loloish, sometimes closer to Burmish, sometimes unique
- Lexical innovations include:
 - Sun
 - Eye
 - Ear
 - Nose
 - Salt
 - Snake
 - etc.

Mondzish lexical innovations

| <i>Gloss</i> | <i>PLB</i> | <i>Thou</i> | <i>Muangphe</i> | <i>Mango</i> |
|--------------|------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| ‘eye’ | *s-myak H | khi ³³ | tɕiu ³³ | qhai ⁵⁵ |
| ‘ear’ | *na 2 | ta ³³ klɛ ³⁵ | qeaŋ ³³ | qoŋ ³³ |
| ‘nose’ | *sna 1 | tu ³⁵ ka ⁵³ | ne _̣ ⁵³ | tjok ⁵³ |

Mondzish sound changes

Sound changes from PLB (Ziwo Lama 2012):

- PLB *ts- > Proto-Mondzish *s-
- PLB *dz- > Proto-Mondzish *z-
- Kathu ~ Thou has developed interdental fricative reflexes /θ-/ and /ð-/ from Proto-Mondzish sibilants /s-/ and /z-/, respectively.

Thou / Kathu

- Dialect covered by Wu Zili (1994):
Anwang 安王, = ka³³θw³³
- New dialect found in April 2013:
Balong 坝聋, = θou⁵³
- Many consonant clusters with -l-
- Language well-preserved in more isolated villages, with all children speaking the language.

Thou / Kathu: another “fallen leaf”?

- Many initial consonant clusters
 - Many clusters from Proto-Lolo-Burmese
 - Other clusters are found only in TB languages MUCH further west in India, Nepal, etc.
- Much vocabulary is divergent from other Mondzish languages.

Thou / Kathu: another “fallen leaf”?

| <i>Gloss</i> | <i>Thou (Nabi)</i> | <i>Proto-Lolo- Burmese</i> | <i>Other TB</i> |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------|--|
| dog | khli ⁵³ | *k ^w əy ² | Proto-Kiranti *khli |
| ear | ta ³³ klɛ ⁵⁵ | *ʔ-na ² | Taraon kru-na: |
| white | a ³³ phlu ²² | *plu ¹ | |
| blue | a ³³ plɛ ³⁵ | *bra ¹ (PL) | |
| to fly | a ⁵⁵ plɛ ³³ | *byam ¹ | Proto-Tangkhalic *praj |
| leaf | θei ³⁵ phlɔ ¹¹ | *C/V-pak L | Thulung [Kiranti] blam , Trung bjǎŋ ⁵⁵ |
| right side | plae ³⁵ pa ³³ | *s-ya ¹ (PL) | Proto-Tani *[lak-] bruuk |
| neck | lɔ ²¹ klæ ³⁵ | *m-liŋ ¹ | Northern Naga *klin |

Thou / Kathu: another “fallen leaf”?

Possibilities:

- 1. Originally a non-Lolo-Burmese language that has been relexified by Mondzish languages due to intensive contact?
 - Compare Lepcha: AA substratum overlaid by TB (Blench 2013)
- 2. Or, a Lolo-Burmese missing / remnant subbranch relexified by Mondzish?
- 3. Or, a “fully” Mondzish language with no substratum?

Muangphe

- muan⁵³, muan⁵⁵phe²¹
- Pop. 300
- Xinfazhai 新发寨 village, Guangnan County
- Known locally and by themselves as Lairen 佬人 (also applied to Bolyu)
- Many labialized clusters (C^w)

Maza

- ma³³za⁵³
- Pop. 50
- Mengmei 孟梅 village, Funing County
- Also known as the Mengmei Lolo 孟梅傣傣
- Many Eastern Kra (Qabiao, Buyang) loanwords
- Chinese historical records indicate that the area used to have a Qabiao (Pubiao) population; Kra speakers who shifted to Mondzish?

Maza: Qabiao substratum

| <i>Gloss</i> | <i>Maza</i> | <i>Qabiao</i> | <i>Muangphe</i> |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| blood | qa ⁵³ | qa ³³ | sei ³³ |
| bone | xa ³³ ʔdan ³⁵ | daak ³³ | you ³³ |
| egg | tən ⁵³ | khai ⁵³ [Tai borrowing] | yu ³³ ʔou ⁵⁵ |
| flower | pu ⁵³ | puŋ ³³ | vwei ²¹ |
| intestines | sei ⁵³ | sai ³³ | yu ⁵³ |
| meat | ʔou ³⁵ | ʔiau ³³ | xu ³³ |
| moon | mu ⁵³ ntan ³³ | taan ⁵³ | la ³³ pei ²¹ |

Mango / Manga

- Mango: ma⁵⁵ŋo²¹ (Hsiu 2013)
 - Pop. 50
- Manga: ma³³ŋa³³ (Lama 2012)
 - Pop. 500?
- Mango is highly endangered, spoken in Babao Town, Guangnan County.
- Preserves two final stops /-t/ and /-k/, as in ʒat⁵³ ‘chicken’ and tjok⁵³ ‘nose’

Maang / Meang

- Meang: mæaŋ⁵³
- Maang: maan³³
- Perhaps 1,000 – 2,000 speakers
- Proto-Mondzish *s- and *z- merge as /s-/ (e.g., PM *za² > Meang sa³³ ‘to eat’)
- Proto-Mondzish *ɣ- and *x- merge as /ɣ-/ (e.g., PM *xo¹ > Meang ɣa³³ ‘meat’)

Munji / Mantsi

- Munji: $mu^{53}ndz\dot{i}^{21}$
- Mantsi: $m\tilde{a}^{53}t\dot{s}i^{53}$
- Total pop.: nearly 5,000?
- Classified as Yi in China, Lo Lo in Vietnam; Black, White, Flowery subdivisions
- Most widely spoken Mondzish dialect cluster
- Relatively widely spoken in Yunnan, Guangxi provinces of China; Ha Giang and Cao Bang provinces of Vietnam

Culture

- Bronze drums: Muangphe, Mondzi
- Bamboo & calabash mouth organs: Kathu, Maang
- Musical instruments are critically endangered, much more so than languages.
- Neighboring groups: Zhuang (Central Tai), Hmong, Bagan (Austroasiatic)

State of the art

- No Mondzish language has had a word list with more than ~500 items.
- Only grammatical sketches are Kathu (Wu Zili 1994) and Maang (Wu Zili 1993)
- Even more distinct languages may exist, such as the reported “Meng” and “Mengpu” of Guangnan County

Future research

- Comparative survey of Monzdish languages needed, especially in Wenshan Prefecture, China; highly urgent for some critically endangered languages
- Kathu / Thou should be a priority due to divergent lexicon and archaisms.
- Proto-Mondzish reconstruction -> revision of Proto-Lolo-Burmese needed?

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Thank you!

*Meang mouth-organ, Napo County, Guangxi
Author photo*

