

## THE GENETIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUKHOTHAI AND AYUTTHAYA

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The Tai varieties attested in Sukhothai (13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Ayutthaya (15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> centuries) inscriptions are often assumed to be precursors of Modern Thai. However, the exact genetic relationship between these two languages is still uncertain due to lack of empirical study. Two opposing views are found in the literature. The first one assumes that Sukhothai is an earlier stage of Ayutthaya (e.g. Kullavanijaya 2008, Jaratjarungkiat 2012, Takahashi 2012). An alternative view is that the two varieties belong to different subgroups (Brown 1965). To determine the genetic relationship between these two medieval varieties, we examine whether they share significant phonological innovations. Analyses of correspondences between graphemes in Sukhothai (13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) and early Ayutthaya inscriptions (15<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Proto-Southwestern Tai phonemes reveal seven common sound changes: (1) the merger of dorsal obstruents, (2) the merger of PSWT \*au and \*aj, (3) the merger of PSWT \*ɲ-, \*j- and \*ʔj-, (4) the loss of voicing distinction in sonorants, (5) \*ɬl- > d-, (6) \*k<sup>h</sup>r- > k<sup>h</sup>-, and (7) \*<sup>h</sup>r- > h-. Moreover, the data show that each innovation occurs concurrently in Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, indicating that the two varieties were spoken by the same speech community. Therefore, we conclude, in contrast to the two views, that the language of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya inscriptions are in fact the same language.

### References

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