LOAN WORDS AND METAPHORICAL FIELD

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For a long time, research in the field of linguistic origins, specifically applied to the Vietnamese language, has been based almost exclusively on the hypothesis of loan words or lexical borrowing, following the primary step of determining the basic set of vocabulary and structural features of the language.

The hypothesis of loan words in fact centres on an approach used in the grouping of languages, and implicitly ethnicities. As the approach was patterned after geographic and demographic boundaries, mainly of the 20th century, it often tends to bypass the overlapping and fuzzy nature of demarcation lines between different languages or families, as well as many compositional or constitutive aspects of a single language.

At a level of practical application, the hypothesis of lexical borrowing appears to have some constraints regarding the subjective and dualistic nature of the term ‘borrowing’. Strictly speaking, the act of borrowing must invariably involve a borrower and a lender. In legal parlance, borrowing should also be connected with consideration, which in the past may denote some form of cultural exchange, bartering, trading or even subordination of one ethnic group to another. The subjective and dualistic nature of the term ‘borrowing’ has been inextricably linked with nationalistic or sometimes tribalistic zeal, and the end result is that generally no firm conclusion could be reached, especially as to the identity of the borrower, and the ethnicity origin of speakers of a language. Although in theory, as noted by Mark Alves [1], two languages, regardless of being geographically distant, that have a large number of cognates with sound correspondences may strengthen claims of genealogical affiliation, very few claims have been made in practice, as to the original source of a language, despite some tentative conclusions regarding the family group of the language. Examples abound in comparative studies between Vietnamese and Mường, Vietnamese and Mon Khmer, Vietnamese and Thai, etc. (See [1] for review). It could be said one of the main reasons for this, is that the approach seems to operate in rapport with other related sciences, like anthropology, archaeology, history, sociology, and the emerging field of DNA testing, and the methodologies and conclusions made in one field of studies must be consistent with those of others.

Many premises underlying the hypothesis of loan words are characterized by political correctness related to ancient history, having been in existence much longer than any sciences, especially the modern ones, linguistics included. Political correctness in this instance was derived from courtesy, and respect of data, information and ancient writings provided by the locals to researchers and scholars from Europe, especially during centuries of first contact between East and West. Whereas some, if not a good
number of these data or writings, may possess great value and even high degree of reliability, some must have been amended or edited with political motivation, commonly related to the prevalent regime at the time, or the need for unification and formation of the nation-state. Historically, political correctness in the original data supplied has evolved through time and, in many countries in Asia, has been underpinned by the state-society syndrome, whereby the state, whenever possible, would assume the omnipotent role of assigning fundamental characteristics and at times, values and tradition, for the society.

Central to this is the common theme found in many places, being every country has had its own language and dialects, over a long period of time, and sometimes since time immemorial. The standard pronunciation or dialect of the predominant or ruling ethnic group, would evolve from, and be that of the direct descendants of the original inhabitants of that country or the population at times of historical glory or shining civilization, normally in the long past. Such premise, though consistent with a model, called the Tree-and-Branch model for the time being, when put under rigorous scientific scrutiny, could be at best a good assumption. At some time in the past, nevertheless it could be merely imprecise data or half-truth, yet most likely favoured by local scholars, or mandarins, never trained in analysing data or scientific enquiry in the western tradition. In other words, the basic premise of national ethnicity and language has always been fuzzy in both space and time, and the precise or defining moment that a country came into existence, with its well-defined boundaries, national ethnicity, and its own language(s) has never been known with certainty. This is compounded with the fact that some languages have been transformed into alphabetic forms only within the past few hundred years, initially by European scholars and missionaries, such as Vietnamese (quốc-ngữ). Fuzzy as it is, the premise resulting from initial information or data supplied by the locals, over time, has become very much entrenched in research methodologies.

On the other hand, the rationale underlying word borrowing has not been fully explored, especially in the framework of ancient historical interactions between neighbouring ethnicities. Such rationale would involve questions such as: ‘Did people borrow words because they had not seen things before, or had no way to conceptualize a phenomenon, or to grasp a new idea?’ In other words: ‘Do the characteristics and nature of lexical borrowing in ancient times differ from those in modern times?’ OR: ‘What was the actual consideration associated with loan words from one ethnic group to another?’ Alternatively: ‘Did borrowing take place under some kind of duress, involving subordination of one ethnic group to another? If so, was there a command element in word borrowing?’ In the main, it can be seen that, apart from the so-called Tree-and-Branch model, named for the purpose of this discussion, there are virtually few, if any, alternatives available that can provide explanation for similarities in words coming from different languages. Especially when two different languages were classified as belonging to two different language families. Facing with two sets of constraints, one being a lack of complete
understanding of the mechanics of word borrowing, the other, the subjective and
dualistic nature of lexical borrowing, the hypothesis of loan words, though frequently
used, does not often lead to definite and agreeable conclusions about the etymology of
words, or their linguistic origins.

In the Chinese language, word borrowing, called Jia Jie 假借, was classified as one
of the six methods of word formation, around 2000 years ago during the Han Dynasty.
Features of Jia Jie, or Giả Tà in Vietnamese, have been extensively studied in China
ever since. Basically Jia Jie relies on borrowing the script form, or pronunciation, or
tone, or variation in any, or combination of these. Jia Jie methodologies adapted for
Vietnamese, would immediately leave out the script form, and replace it with
alphabetic spelling, which inherently would involve some uncertainty in
pronunciation. This is most commonly the case of Hán-Việt or Sino-Vietnamese
words, especially uncommon or relatively new words that post-quốc-ngữ generations
did not know how they had been pronounced in the past. And unbeknown to most
Vietnamese speakers, a large number of Sino-Vietnamese words have only been
reconstructed within the 20th century, based on methodologies largely unchecked (e.g.
[2]). Underlying this is another problematic premise, involving a tendency to study
cognates and etymology of Vietnamese words, particularly those classified as ‘truly
Vietnamese’ (ie. Nôm), by comparing them only with lexicon from languages within
the Austro-asiatic or any non-Sino-Tibetan family, like Thai, Mon-Khmer, Burmese,
Malaysian, etc. and leaving the Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary for comparison with
Chinese. Little attention has been paid in the search for the origin of Nôm, as well as
Sino-Vietnamese words, from the vast array of Chinese thesaurus and its dialects, and
as shown later and elsewhere [3], the Sino-Korean variety of the Korean language,
and other Polynesian sources.

The traditional approach in studying Asian languages in the main, by relying on the
Tree-and-Branch model, has resulted in a central premise, being most major dialects
of a language either stem from that national language, or belong to waves of external
migrants, later on becoming ethnic minorities. Any variation in pronunciation would
come from climatic or environmental influence, and interaction with local inhabitants.
This would tend to obscure critical examination of an alternative hypothesis
considering the language of a nation as a historical and evolutionary combination of
many dialects spoken by most inhabitants of the country, and some in neighbouring
countries, in ancient times, when a nation, its national identity and language were still
fuzzy in both space and time. Failure to recognize such evolutionary and constitutive
aspects would lead to bypassing an important facet relating to ‘internal loan words’,
i.e. lexical borrowing among constitutive ethnic groups, between a language at its
formative stage and its own dialects. Internal loan words also could have been derived
from languages and dialects of other neighbouring countries, all having some
ethnicities in common, though naturally at different composition distributions.
For example, the majority of studies of the Hán-Việt or Sino-Vietnamese variety has been based on the premise that the origin of Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary came directly from Chinese ‘loan words’ and the pronunciation was derived either from preserving ancient Chinese pronunciation, or from Vietnamese own innovation and variation of original Chinese sounds. The end result is that such Sino-Vietnamese lexicon, constituting around 60% of Vietnamese, has rarely been compared with those of its own wide range of dialects, all different Chinese dialects, and many other languages separated over long distances such as Korean and Japanese – especially their Sino-varieties – and Malay, Tagalog, as well as Polynesian languages. Ancestors of speakers of these languages and dialects sharing some lexical and structural features with Vietnamese, could have had the same ethnicities that contributed to the evolutionary formation of the Vietnamese language.

Working from the old folklore about the union of Áu Cơ & Lạc Long Quân and the 18 reigns of King Hùng Vương, Nguyen [3] has developed a new theory on the origin of the Vietnamese, and demonstrated through many case examples, using historical, cultural and linguistic data among others, that Vietnamese is a historical and evolutionary merger of many languages and dialects. It has a Mon-Khmer substratum mixed with Thai and Polynesian, superimposed and interwoven with strata of the ancient Bai Yue (Bách Việt) groups in Southern China, ranging from Yunnanese, Cantonese, to Fujian, Wu (Shanghai-Zhejiang), Hainanese, and reinforced by the Hakka and Miao-Yao (Hmong-Mien) combination. The theory is based on a model, tentatively called the Tree-and-Soil model, to be outlined later. Under the theory, most of the lexicon hitherto considered as loan words, especially in the long past, would come from languages and dialects that contributed to evolutionary formation of Vietnamese. It follows naturally that lexical borrowing would immediately be relegated to a second-order issue. In the following, this important feature of the theory will be further examined, with a view to getting a better understanding of the mechanics of internal loan words in ancient times. But first, let us consider some varieties of word similarities commonly attributable to lexical borrowing, noting that in many cases, like similarities over long distance, it is rather difficult to rely on the traditional hypothesis of loan words for explanation.

Long distance similarities

There is a wide range of words for the first singular pronoun ‘I / me’ in Vietnamese: tôi, ta, tao, tui, tớ, mình, mỗ, qua,... Of these, Qua is used mainly by Vietnamese in the Mekong delta, normally considered as belonging to the Southern dialect. Qua is definitely a cognate of [Guá] in the Fujian dialect and the Hainan dialect of Chinese, and almost identical to [wa] in the Muông dialect. [Qua], or [Wa], also bears strong resemblance to Japanese [watashi], which seems to include, as a second syllable, another word denoting ‘I / me’ in Vietnamese: [ta]. Sino-Vietnamese form of qua is [ngã] (‘nga’ with the glottal-broken accent mark /~/), which has similar sound correspondence in the Hakka dialect: [nga] or [ngai]. ‘Qua’ also has cognates among the Mon-Khmer varieties {see Hayes [4]}: [nqua], [iqua], [aku], etc., as well as
[ngagun] in the Australian Aboriginal ‘Wagiman’ language [5]. Sound correspondences of ‘Qua’ can include also [ako] of Tagalog, and [kou] of Tongan [6].

Inside the Hakka dialect, there is a swap of sound between words with initial [ng] and those without [ng], similar to Cantonese, as in [Ngou] in the surname [Ngou Yeung] which can also be pronounced [Ou Yeung] [Vietnamese: Âu Dương], in some sub-dialects of Cantonese. Similarly, the name of the Mother of Vietnam’s first King Hùng Vương according to the folklore was Âu Cơ, which was pronounced by the Mường as [Ngâu Ko] [8]. Thus, sound correspondence for Vietnamese word ‘Qua’ in Hakka, being [nga] or [ngai], and after stripping off initial [ng], can also be pronounced as [A] or [AI] respectively, especially in many Hakka sub-dialects. Personal pronoun [A] (pronounced ‘aa’) in Hakka has identical sound in the Sino-Korean variety [7], whilst [AI] is still retained as the Vietnamese personal pronoun, with permanent nuance in the interrogative form, equivalent to ‘Who’ in English:
- Who took my cell phone?: A1 dâ lây điện thoại di động của tôi?

It is interesting to note that in the answer ‘Who knows / Ai biết đâu.’, the pronoun ‘Ai’ in Vietnamese can denote ‘I’, meaning ‘I don’t know’ = A1 biết đâu = Tôi không biết. There is thus a remnant of ‘AI’ denoting ‘I / me’ in Vietnamese through comparison with the first personal pronoun [nga], [ngai], [a] and [AI] in the Hakka dialect. Apart from the Hakka cognate ‘Ai’, evidence of ‘Ai’ formerly in Vietnamese meaning ‘I / me’, through other cognates, includes:
- [AI] in the Mạ ethnic group in Central Vietnam
- [AI] in the Kha ethnic group along the Laotian-Vietnam border
- [Atashi] in Japanese (optional for female)
- [Aku] in the Malay language
- [Au] in the Polynesian languages: Maori, Tahiti and Fiji

Similarity in sound between Vietnamese ‘Ai’ and English ‘I’, both denoting the first personal pronoun, could be just a coincidence, noting that ‘I’ in English has a German cognate ‘Ich’, corresponding to the Old English form ‘Ic’ [9]. Nevertheless, it can be seen that usage of [qua] and [ai] through similar sounds for the first personal pronoun ‘I / me’, through other cognates, includes:
- [AI] in the Mạ ethnic group in Central Vietnam
- [AI] in the Kha ethnic group along the Laotian-Vietnam border
- [Atashi] in Japanese (optional for female)
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The problem of ‘loan words’ not strictly coming from ‘borrowing’, would become more apparent when considering the verb ‘to CUT’ in its Vietnamese equivalent, which has similar sound and spelling: Cắt. Interestingly also, out of a near random sample of 30 different languages, 18 have words with meaning equivalent to ‘to cut’ (cắt), yielding similar sounds. To name a few: KaTî (Bengali), Kotiva (Fijian), Couper (French), Cortar (Spanish / Portuguese), Kuah? or Kak (Fujian), Kat 刻 劃 (Hakka & Fujian), Cátwa & Cakāq (Champa), Kaatnaa (Hindi), Kirimasu (Japanese), Kixxiq (InupiaQ - Eskimo), Katim (New Guinea), Gaat (Khmer),…
Studying the word ‘cắt’ within the traditional framework, by focusing only on comparing the so-called pure Nôm (thuần Nôm) word ‘cắt’ with its ‘official’ Sino-Vietnamese word ‘thiết’ (Mandarin pinyin: [qie]; Hakka: [ts’iat] [7]) or with the Mon-Khmer array [4]: [tak], [tat], [tac], [tââch], etc. would immediately obscure closely similar sounds coming from the Hakka or Fujian (Min Yue) dialect [7]: [Kat] or [Kak], though under different script forms, 刻 and 刃.

One Thai word for ‘to cut’ is [dtaht], with ‘dt’ being a sound between ‘d’ and ‘t’. Thai word [dtaht] is a cognate of Vietnamese ‘tách’ in tách ra or tách rời having meaning very close to ‘to cut’: to sever, to separate. Both ‘Tách’ or ‘Dtaht’ in fact have etymological source in Mon-Khmer, mentioned above. Interestingly, tách also has similar sound to the French verb ‘tailler’ or English ‘to tear’. Southern Chinese dialects have a range of thesaurus with meanings close to ‘sever’ or ‘cut’, giving similar sounds: [tok] or [tak] (Hakka and Min Yue (Fujian)): 琢 斲 削. The French verb ‘tailler’ has cognate ‘tailleur’, meaning ‘tailor’ whose occupation involves primarily the act of ‘cutting’ fabric. Similarly, the word ‘scissors’ is called ‘Kéo’ (cái kéo) in Vietnamese, the sound being not far from the verb Cắt (to cut). Many other languages also have words for ‘scissors’ with sounds similar to kéo, and in some ways also close to Cắt (To Cut): [kau] 鉈 (Hakka & Fujian), kaqjei (Burmese), kaingii (Hindi), kaci (Bengali), katura (Sinhalese), i koti (Fijian), hele kosi (Tongan), etc. The verb ‘to saw’ (or noun) in Vietnamese is cưa (noun: cái Cưa), also has sound close to cắt (cut), reflecting from [geoi] or [guk] 錳 in Cantonese, or [ku-u] in MinYue (Fujian). It is interesting to see also that ‘to chop’ (a tree) has Vietnamese equivalent chặt, with similarity in sound. Chặt on the other hand is close to the Korean word for ‘Cut’: [challayo], and to Minnan (Fujian): [chhok] or [cham], being ‘trâm’ in Vietnamese.

Another word that has world-wide similarities in initial and sound is ‘to Die’. A ‘popular’ verb like ‘to Die’ would have lots of thesaurus, coming from various ethnicities in any national group. One of the most commonly-used Vietnamese word is ‘Mất’ with Hakka cognate [Mak], Fijian ‘Mate’ and Malay ‘Mati’. Like ‘to Cut’, Vietnamese Mất (to Die) has many sound similarities, beginning with ‘M’, with a good number of languages: Mourir (French), Marw (Welsh), Muotti (Finnish), Marnaa (Hindi), Mordan (Persian), Mori (Bengali), Morrer (Portuguese), Morrer (Spanish), Matay (Tagalog). The sound of ‘to Die’ in English originally could be [i] and not [ai], as between ‘I’ and ancient ‘Ic’ above, and in the circumstances, another language group would yield similar sound: Đì (rỗi) {Vietnamese}, Teas {Scottish}, Do {Swedish}, [si] {Chinese}, Tứ {Sino-Vietnamese}, [Dee] {Hainanese}, oTi
It should be noted that *Di* in Vietnamese also means ‘to Walk’, ‘to Go’ which is very similar to ‘oDi’ in Macedonian.

Similarities in word sounds over long distance would easily evoke various theories of Proto World Language (e.g. Nicolay Marr, Joseph Greenberg, Merritt Ruhlen, etc.), which seem to be closely linked with the Tree-and-Branch approach. However, it seems clear that the afore-mentioned examples on ‘To Cut’ and ‘to Die’ have served to illustrate that lexical similarities over long distance could hardly stem from borrowing, or branching, but could be connected with the mental process and mode of creating words by people at different places in ancient times. As seen later, ‘global lexicon’ as such may not be totally ancient, and it could be a continuing process dating within the first millennium B.C.E. It is also conceivable that in any language, there are species of global lexicon that came into being by way of mimicking the sound of, or generated by, an act, or that given by an animal or a bird. For animal sounds, consider:

- **Monkey** => *Khỉ* (Vietnamese) / Kera (Malay) / Kra (Champa) / Kiok (Hakka) / nKima (Kongo), [Keoi] (Cantonese).
- **Beef - Bull** – *Bos* (English) => Boeuf (French) => Bò and Bê (Vietnamese) / Bou (Romanian) / Povi (Samoan) / Baka (Tagalog) / Ba-choog (Tibetan) / Bue (Italian)/ Buey (Spanish) / Boi (Portuguese), etc.
- Most interesting, the sound of the Crow gave its name: *Quạ Ô*. *Quạ Ô* [kwa-o] has equivalent as [vu-a] in Hakka, [wu / ya] in Mandarin, [u] in Wu, [ou] Fujian, and [o] Sino-Korean [7], all under monosyllabic pressure. The *Quạ (Ô)* bird (*Crow*) is called *Corbeau* in French, *Corvo* in Italian and Portuguese, *Ka'aw* in Maya, *Kalo* in Romanian [10]. It can be seen that by splitting the syllables, words for Crow in other languages would yield sounds similar to Vietnamese *Quạ Ô* [kwa-o]:
  - [Corb // eau] (French); [Cr // ow] {[kar // ow]} (English)
  - [Corv // o] (Italian, Portuguese); [Ka // aw] (Maya); [Kal // o] (Romanian) [17]

Apart from word formation using sounds, there is also a hint of lexical generation by ‘ancient’ conceptualization, as exemplified by words indicating ‘small’ or ‘little’. The basic Chinese word for ‘small’ is *小* [Xiao], having pronunciations in other dialects (such as Zhejiang-Shanghai (Wu)) closer to *Tí* in Vietnamese, though under different script forms [7]: 點 [ti] (Wu), 些 [si] (Wu). The vowel sound [i] within [xiao] or [ti] is very common in words in many languages denoting something tiny or small: — [yi], meaning number 1, or ‘little’. [Yi] is equivalent to *it* (Vietnamese), [iLi?] Wu, and [ich] (Japanese). Correspondingly: petit (French), sitan (Serbo-Croatian), litil (Iceeland), wee / little / tiny (English), iti (Tahitian) {~ it + ti - Vietnamese}, Ti (Haitian), tikho (Ukrainian), chinna (Tamil), liklik (New Guinea), ki’i (Tongan), etc. The Vietnamese language seems to have a penchant for using the sound [i] for words indicating ‘little’
or ‘small’: li nhi, hi hi, it, li ti (~ litil => Iceland), ti hon, be ti ti, nhi, con chi (lice), etc. It can thus be hypothesized that at some time in the long past some kind of conceptualization must have taken place to call a very small ‘animal’, being the Rat or Mouse, as ‘Ti’, or vice versa. ‘Ti’, written as _vertical_bar [zi] in Chinese, has been used as the First of the 12 Chinese Zodiac signs, also called 12 Earthly branches, represented by the Mouse. Another Vietnamese synonym for Ti or it is chút {[chit] or [chio] Fujian} with ‘chotto’ as Japanese cognate, having sound very close to the Vietnamese name for ‘Rat’ or ‘Mouse’: Chuột. It should be noted that chút, with sound declension into Chuột, in fact is also close to the typical sound made by the Rat (chút chít). Some other languages also share this feature of interchange between Ti (small) and Chuột (rat) in one way or another: ‘Rat’ is called Tikus (Indonesian), [Chhu] (Fujian), Ch’o’ (Maya), [ts’y] (Wu). ‘Small’ is synonymous with: [ChoTaa] in Hindi, and [ChôTo] in Bengali, ‘Chichan’ in Yucatec (Maya) [10]. Vietnamese has both Ti and Chút, with corresponding sounds in Wu and Minnan (Fujian), indicating ‘small’ or ‘small amount’. Some conceptualization for one smallest animal, together with sound mimicking and slight declension, would make Ti and Chút a popular metaphor for the Rat or Mouse, and hence Vietnamese name: Chuột.

Ti and Chuột can bring to mind speakers of different tongues within the Vietnamese language and the concept of Metaphorical Field in lexical generation, rather than word borrowing by conventional wisdom, presented asunder.

Metaphorical field

In many languages, the word describing the ‘Moon’ is often paired with that meaning ‘Month’, since ‘month’ was conceived very early as one basic cycle of the Moon. For example: [yue] and [yue] (Chinese), [mah] and [mah] (Persian), [lā] and [lā] (Burmese), [bulan] and [bulan] (Malay), [vula] and [vula] (Fijian), [masina] and [masina] (Samoan), [mececev: moon] and [mesec: month] (Serbo-Croatina), [maan: moon] and [maand: month] (Dutch), [mane: moon] and [maned: month] (Danish), etc.

In the Vietnamese language, the word for ‘Moon’ came from one compositional group: Trăng (originally: ‘blăng’ [11] => ‘tăng’ – similar to ‘Bulan’ in Malay), and for ‘Month’, from another group: Tháng – compared with: [Căn] for Moon and [Pilan] for Month, in the Champa language; ‘La Lune’ (Moon) and ‘Le Mois’ (Month), in French. On examination of neighbouring languages, it can be seen that in Vietnamese, Trăng (Moon) has a cognate ‘Bulan’ in Malay, whereas Tháng (Month) was most likely derived from Mường [khang] and Fujian [Thang] meaning ‘month’ and ‘rising moon’, respectively. This would indicate that, metaphorical word pairs in Vietnamese, like French, may have elements coming from different tongues, both constituting the language as a whole.

Features of internal borrowing or lexical generation by metaphors, as shown above, can be best illustrated through the search for the origins of names for basic colors.
First, the Vietnamese word for White color is Trắng (màu Trắng). By applying one of the rules of lexical borrowing or Jia Jie (Giả Tá), using tonal change, it can be seen: Trắng being the color of Trăng, ie. White is the color of the Moon. Ancient Vietnamese borrowed Trăng to form Trắng describing the color White by using the Moon as metaphor. This is very similar to the Thai way of metaphorizing the color White, by describing in olden times, White being the color of Rice. In Thai, Rice is called [Kʰəow] (gạo / com – Vietnamese), and White is [Kʰəow] (Rice) pronounced with a different tone: [Kʰãow] {i.e. [Kʰəow] (Rice) with a falling-rising tone).

The Thai way of coupling White with Rice is supported by the Chinese word 白 [Bai]-2, which also has another Jia Jie word having different tone 米 [Bai]-4 meaning ‘white or polished rice’. Corresponding Vietnamese sound for [Bai] is Bạch meaning White. However Bạch could also be metaphorically linked with [Bak] in Mon Khmer [4] or Bạc in Vietnamese, meaning ‘Silver’. Another word for the color White in Chinese is 精 [jing] with Sino-Vietnamese form as Tình as in trắng tình. Tình also means ‘polished rice’, commonly used in compound words like: Tình-trưng (semen), quỷ-tình (ghost, having white color). Another word indicating White is 粉 [fen] (Vietnamese: phấn), also meaning ‘Flour’.

Vietnamese metaphorical use of Trăng (Moon: Bułan) for the color Trắng (White) also seems to have some support from the French language: BLANC, which bears strong sound similarity to Trăng’s cognate: ‘Bulan’. In the English language also, ‘to blanche’ (as in ‘blanched peanuts’), and ‘bleach’ could be said to be etymologically related to the French adjective ‘Blanc’ or ‘Blanche’, all metaphorically linked with ‘Bulan’ (Moon).

Ancient Vietnamese and Thai also seemed to make metaphors out of the Moon (Tlăng / Trăng) in other instances, like in Vietnamese: Tleon => Trôn (round, circular) and Tlông => Trống (drum) [11], with Thai equivalent [glohm] and [glawng], respectively.

The color Black very often derived its metaphor from ‘night time’, or vice versa: Dêm (night), giving rise to Đen (Black), or similarly: Tối (night) => màu Tối (Dark color). In Thai: [see Dam] is Black color, very close to Vietnamese sắc Đêm (màu Đêm). It is interesting to note that a Chinese word for ‘Black’ is 黑, pronounced as [tam] or [tim] in Hakka, and [taam] in Cantonese, close to Vietnamese Đêm. The word for ‘Black horse’ is 马 pronounced as [tim] or [daam] in Cantonese, and [tan] or
[dian] in Mandarin, all very close to Đêm or den. Đêm (or den, which sometimes may be associated with Sẳm or Đاحتمال meaning Black, Dark, or Dense) – with some dialect pronunciation as [Điểm] – and Hakka’s [tam] or [tim] bear striking similarity in sound with English words: Dim and Dense. In the Champa language, one word for ‘Black’ is [tăm], with Mon-Khmer cognates of [tâm] or [qitem] or [səm] [4], normally in Vietnamese as compound word: ‘tố-tăm’ meaning ‘Dark’. ‘Tâm’ also has cognate as *[zəm] or [qudem] in Mon-Khmer [4] [22]. [Zəm] or [qudem] is close to ‘đậm’, ‘sẳm’, ‘đểm’ in Vietnamese. In Chinese: 夜[Ye] or [Yi], meaning night, and 影 or 影 [Yi] meaning ‘dark’, ‘black’ – have similar sounds under Jia Jie. The same sort of metaphor can be traced in French: Nuit (night) => Noir (black), noting that the Italian and Portuguese word for ‘Night’ is ‘Notte’ and ‘Noite’, respectively. There is another Chinese word for Black, called [wu] (Ô or Quạ): 鴉 metaphorizing the Crow (Chim Ô). Another Chinese word for ‘Black’ took metaphor from the black stuff spurting out from an octopus or squid: 墨, pronounced [mo] or [mei] in Mandarin, and [mak] or [maak] in Cantonese. In Chinese it refers to ‘black Ink’ or ‘black, dark’. Its sound correspondence in Thai ([meuk]) and Vietnamese ([mực]), is used to denote ‘Ink’, and ‘Octopus’ or ‘Squid’. This commonality between Thai and Vietnamese will lead to an introductory remark about the ‘Tree-and-Soil’ model, which would state that between Thai and Vietnamese, there must be a common constitutive group of speakers that use the same word [meuk] (mực) to denote both ‘Ink’ and ‘Squid’. Likewise, [Chai] (Thai) or [Xài] (Vietnamese) is used by a common constitutive group of the two languages to denote BOTH ‘to use’ and ‘to spend (money)’. Similarly, [Kʰaow] (Thai) or [Góż / Cơm] (Vietnamese) is used by that same, or another, common group of speakers to denote ‘Rice’ or ‘cooked Rice’, or ‘Meal’.

In Korean, the word for ‘Black’ is [komun] sounding very similar to Vietnamese gõ mun meaning Ebony or Black-wood. The adjective mun meaning ‘Black’ customarily is used in collocation with Mèo (cat) as: Mèo Mun being ‘Black Cat’, having the same initial ‘M’. Other Sino-Vietnamese words for Black are ‘ám’ 陰 & 陰, pronounced the same in Cantonese: [am], and the sound is commonly used in Hainan for ‘Black’, though written differently: 晚, referring also to Night time. The word Ám 陰 above, meaning Black, is normally metaphorically linked with ‘Negative’ [yin] (as opposed to ‘Positive’ 陽 [yang]).

In ancient China, the color Yellow came very early from the metaphor ‘Loess’ {[Huang Tu] / Hoàng Thổ}, being yellow-earth or wind-borne deposits along the Huang He (Yellow River). Its Chinese pronunciation [Huang] gave rise to sound correspondence [Wang] or [Wong] in some Chinese dialects and [Vang] in Hakka and
(northern) Vietnamese (Vàng). The most significant Chinese metaphor of [Huang] is ‘Huang Di’ meaning Emperor, originally: Emperor of the Yellow Land. In English, the word ‘Yolk’ in ‘Egg Yolk’ looks much metaphorically related to ‘Yellow’, which is described in French as ‘Jaune d’oeuf’.

Blue and Green took metaphors mainly from Sky / Sea, and Leaf / Grass, respectively. Blue color is called xanh da trời (sky blue), xanh dương (ocean blue) or xanh lam (blue or indigo – [laam]-Cantonese). Green is xanh lục ([luk]-Cantonese), xanh lá cây – which correspond to similar metaphors in many languages. For example: Irish / Welsh: Glas (with sound similar to ‘Grass’) meaning ‘Green’ (GRass ⇔ GReen); Czech: ‘Obloha’ meaning both Sky and Blue [10]. In Chinese, 青 [qing] (thanh – Sino-Vietnamese) has sound close to: [qian] = sky, and the same sound [qian] written as芊 means ‘green foliage, green grass’ [7]. It should be noted that the initial ‘X’ in ‘xanh’ shows a sound correspondence (X <=> Th) between Chinese dialects and Vietnamese, Burmese and Mon-Khmer varieties. For example: Salween = Thalwin (river); [cheng] (Chinese) => thanh; rusa (‘deer’ in Mon-Khmer) => ratha, ritha (Champa); [qing] => xanh = thanh. Sometimes from afar: French word (le) Singe => Thân (associated with Monkey, being one of the 12 Zodiac signs).

There is a strong metaphorical link between the color Red and the first colorful observation by homo sapiens: ‘Blood’. Main Vietnamese words for ‘Red’ are Hồng and Đỏ, and for ‘Blood’, Huyết and Máu. While [hong] means the Sun in the Tai dialect of the Yunnan area, the ‘official’ use of [hong] for Red in Chinese-Vietnamese dictionaries again tend to obscure the range of thesaurus and etymology of ‘Red’ in both languages. Interestingly, Huyết and Máu in Vietnamese have cognates in many languages thousands of miles away, and thousands of years ago. Words similar to [Huyết] are: (i) 血 pronounced as [xue] in Mandarin, but closer to ‘Huyết’ as [Hiet] in Hakka, [Hyut] in Cantonese, and almost identical [Huih?] in Fujian, where [?] is the glottal stop, a sound between [uh] and [oh] when pronouncing ‘uh-oh’ altogether. (ii) ‘Ver’ in Hungarian, ‘Veri’ in Finnish, ‘Gwyar’ and ‘Gwaed’ in Welsh. Similar to Máu indicating ‘blood’, is the word [Mud] of the Sumerian language, thousands of years ago [10].

Words that have meanings interchanged between ‘Red’ and ‘Blood’, and yield familiar sounds, include: (a) ‘Whero’ in Maori, meaning Red, but with sound similar to Huyết (Blood); (b) ‘Wouj’ in Haitian Creole, also meaning ‘Red’; (c) [Hyoraek] in Korean, meaning ‘Blood’; (d) 銅 [Wok] in Hakka, and [huo] in Mandarin, meaning ‘red paint’; (e) Vietnamese word for ‘Blood veins’ or ‘Blood pulse’ is mạch 脈 / 脈 having Chinese dialect sounds [7]: [mak] Hakka, [maak] Cantonese, with some
similar to *Máu*: [mo]-4 & [mai]-4 Mandarin, [ma?] Wu, [meh] Fujian, and [meyk] Sino-Korean – indicating that *Mạch* (veins) belongs to the same Metaphorical field as *Máu* (Blood); (f) Tibetan word for the color Red is: ‘Mah’, with ‘Mah’ very close to *Máu* (Blood); AND most interesting: (g) ‘Dugo’ in Tagalog, and ‘Toto’ in Samoan, Tongan, Tahitian, all meaning Blood.

It is ‘Dugo’ and ‘Toto’ under monosyllabic influence that would turn into ‘Du’ or ‘To’, being most likely sound cognate of *Đỏ* (*màu Đỏ*) or ‘Red’ in Vietnamese. The color Red, *Đỏ*, in Vietnamese, with metaphor from Polynesian ‘Blood’ (‘Dugo’ and ‘Toto’), is quite consistent with Nguyen’s theory on the origin of the Vietnamese [3], in that the Polynesians in ancient times constituted one of the main ethnicities evolving into the modern-day Vietnamese. It is noted that, as in the case of *La Lune* and *Le Mois* in French, the Vietnamese language derived *Đỏ* (Red) and *Huyết* or *Máu* (Blood) from different constitutive sources, even though they are all metaphorically related.

A search for metaphors of the color Brown will show that words describing colors through metaphors, not only may change from one group of speakers to another, but also could vary with time.

Ancient (northern) Chinese appeared to use the Brown scorpion 蝎 (Mandarin [he] Cantonese & Hakka [hot]) as metaphor for the Brown color: 褐. Cantonese at one stage preferred using the Palm Tree 棕 for ‘Brown: 棕色 [zung sik], and now swapping for coffee color: 啡色 [fei sik] [15], competing with ‘Chocolate’ in many languages as metaphor for ‘Brown’: [sukkolaa] (Khmer), coklat (Indonesian), etc. Thai word for ‘Brown’ is [nahm dtahn], which is similar for ‘(brown) sugar’.

Vietnamese word for Brown is *Nâu*, having cognates as [nyou-de] in Burmese [6], and [tnaot] in Cambodian [12], all most likely metaphorically linked with ‘Chinese’ word [niao] 鳥 meaning Bird, a brown bird, such as a female ostrich (*Đà-Điểu mái*). *Nâu* (Brown) is thus likely of Mon-Khmer origin and yet also has Chinese connection via [niao]. This can be reconciled by noting that according to ancient Chinese texts, (proto) Mon Khmer groups were called the Di - Qiang [3], present almost everywhere in China, and often associated with the Western Barbarians (Xi Rong / Tây Nhung). The legendary King Yu, founder of the Xia Dynasty of China, is said to have Qiang ethnic origin [3]. Nâu, for Brown, also looks metaphorically related (in sound) to *Nai* (Deer) and *Gâu* (Bear), since these two animals normally have brown-colored skin. The same can be said of a possible link between Brown & Black with Cow (under the generic term ‘Bos’) and Bear. Both Cow/Bull (Bos) and Bear normally bear a Brown or Black color.
In the foregoing illustrations, words like Trăng (Moon) and Trắng (White) are said to belong to, or to form a Metaphorical Field. Normally a metaphorical field is comprised of words having at least one similar ‘phoneme’, most often the initial sound, being trace of ‘internal’ borrowing through metaphorization, by and large in ancient times. There are many instances where one word of a metaphorical field may be sourced from one constitutive dialect, and another word may come from a different dialect, as in the case of La Lune and Le Mois, Blue and Sea, Đỏ (Red) and Huyết or Máu (Blood), even though they are all metaphorically related.

The following are some examples of metaphorical field:

- **NOSE** => nostrils, sniff, neb, snout, snore, snub, snort, schnoz, nuzzle, nozzle, aircraft nose (Vietnamese: Mũi (nose) => mǔi tưới – bow of a boat, mủi kiêm – sharp end of a sword, mủi (smell), mủi lòng (compassioned, touched), mủi Né (Cape Né), etc.
- **WATER** => wave, swash, wash, awash, wake, swell, etc. Noting: French word for Water *Eau* => *Onde* {wave}
- **DIE = MOURIR** (French) => morgue, moribund, murder, morbid, mourning, mortality, mortgage, etc. (Vietnamese: tử (die) => tang (mourning), tống táng (burial)).

It will be clearer if we have a close look at the metaphorical field generated by the Vietnamese word for ‘Face’: Mặt, which has sound correspondences in languages stretching from China to Malaysia, through to Polynesia. Mặt (Face) gave rise to words for: Eye (*Mắt*), Nose (*Mũi*), Mouth (*Mồm / Miệng*), Lips (*Môi*), Eye-brows (*Mày*), Cheek (*Má*), and Pimples (*Mụn*) – all having initial ‘M’ like Mặt. This was first observed by Nguyen Cung Thong, who stopped at identifying those ‘M’ descriptions after Mặt (Face) as largely of Mon-Khmer origin.

It is interesting to note Vietnamese word for ‘Sea’ is Biển (initial ‘B’), compared with French *La Mer* (initial ‘M’), and Korean: HaeByon. (Hae: Hải, Byron: Biển). Metaphorical field generated by Biển includes: Bờ (bank), Bãi (beach), Bến (terminal), Bể (Sea), Ba (wave), and possibly Bão (storm), etc. Even though commonly-used English words for Biển (La Mer) are ‘Sea’ and ‘Ocean’ – there are still vestiges of some connection somewhere in the long past on the initial ‘B’ for things related to the Sea: Bank, Beach, Brine, Bay, Briny, Billows (or Old Norse: Bylgja). One Chinese word for ‘Sea’ is [Hai] (Hải) written as 海 showing the main root 母, pronounced as [mu]-3 or [mou]-3, meaning ‘Mother’, with initial ‘M’. [Hai] (Sea) 海 was derived from radical 母 [Mu] with initial ‘M’ meaning ‘Mother’, showing that either in the past [Hai] has an M sound like [Mou] (Mother), or [Hai]
carried some meaning relating to ‘Mother’. In fact, both (Hải) 海 and [Mou] 母 correspond symmetrically with the French homonym pair: La Mer (Sea) and La Mère (Mother). Accordingly, it can be deduced that at some time in the ancient history of the human race, there was a metaphorical link between word for the Sea and that for the Mother – in the East as well as in the West. In fact, words for Sea and Mother were linked together, through another metaphor referring to ‘something very big and vast’. Name of the Mekong river is said to be comprised of [kong] having Thai sound meaning ‘river’, and [Me] relating to Mother or something very very big. Mekong therefore could very well refer to the Mother river of all rivers, or a very Big river. The same can be said with the Romanian word ‘Mare’ meaning both ‘the Sea’ and ‘Very Big’. It is clear that the Sea was initially a metaphor for a very big ‘object’, which was transcended to Mother, or vice versa. Another word for ‘Sea’ in Thai is [ta?leh] and in Tongan is [tahi] - both being not far from Chinese sound for ‘large’ or ‘big’ [19]: [tai] or [da] {thái and dài in Vietnamese}. Both [tai] and [da] lead to descriptions of Sea or Ocean: ‘Tai Ping Yang’ {Thái Bình Dương} being the Pacific Ocean, and ‘Da Yang’ (Đại Dương) [20], the Ocean. Metaphorical connection between the Sea and Mother still echoed through the lyrics of a well-known Vietnamese song Lòng Mẹ (Motherly love) by Y Văn: ‘Lòng Mẹ bao la như biển Thái Bình dạt dào’ (Motherly love is as vast as the Pacific Ocean).

Consider again the other Chinese word for the Sea 海 [Hai]. It will be clear that [Hai] {Hải – Vietnamese} also has many cognates separated over long distances: Hav {Danish}, Hav {Norwegian}, Hav {Swedish}, Haf {Icelandic}, and ‘Hiavtxwv’ {Hmong}. And it could be that, in the long past, the character 海 was pronounced as [Men] or [Ming] (see below), relying on the root sound 母 [Mou] meaning ‘Mother’, by its speakers, who had control of the political and cultural agenda of the state. The same character was later on used with pronunciation [Hai] when [Hai]-speakers replaced the [Ming] speakers in the capital.

For completeness, words in some other languages denoting the ‘Sea’ with initial ‘M’ or ‘B’, both being bilabial, are compiled as follows:

- M – Meer (German), Mereflod (Old English) [10], Moao (Maori), 溟 [men] (Hakka), [ming] (Mandarin), [myeng] (Sino-Korean), Semut (Khmer), uMi (Japanese), saMi (Samoan), Muda (Sinhalese), Miti (Tahitian), Mare (Romanian), el Mar (Spanish), o Mar (Portuguese), Mungr (Champa) [14], etc.
- B – Bada (Korean), Hae-Byon (Korean), Bpinle (Myanmar), Briny (English), 濱 [bin] (Mandarin), [ban] (Cantonese)
As metaphorical field is commonly characterized by the initial, the following sound similarities are astounding:

- **Large** ⇒ **Lớn** (Vietnamese), Lahi (Tongan) {similar to [Tahi meaning ocean]}, [Long] Hakka & Cantonese [7], [Lang] Mandarin, Liels (Latvian).
- **Big** ⇒ **Bự** (Vietnamese), Besar (Indonesian), iBu (Malay) {= Mother – very big. Note: ‘Bự’ is not far from Malay ‘iBu’ and ‘Besar’}, [Bou] Cantonese, Buyuk (Turkish), etc [16] [18]. It is possible that there is a metaphorical link between Big, Biển (Sea) and Bự, by virtue of an ancient analogy between the Mother and something big like the Sea.
- **Tongue** ⇒ **(la) Langue** ⇒ **Lưoi** (Vietnamese), lei (Cantonese), li (Mandarin), le lười (to loll the tongue), liём (lick), la lòn (shout loud), nói lào (lying, liar), tiếng (tongue / language), thiết (luoi) (tongue), tiếng lồng (slang), tone (thịnh/thanh điệu), liu lo (Mandarin: li lu), etc.

A larger representative sample of lexicon that have close sound similarities, especially the initials, between English (or other languages) and Vietnamese is shown in Table I of the Appendix.

A Metaphorical Field can thus be defined as “A field of lexicon, in which words were generated, most likely in ancient times, by way of mimicking the sound of a basic object or act, that was widely known, and normally through vocabulary of different tongues. The words generated are description of things or acts either in the vicinity or region covered by, or conceptually or metaphorically related to, or simply features of or surrounding, such basic object or act”. As it was mostly made in ancient times, and through originally different language groups, it has been buried over thousands of years, and compounded by historical and evolutionary formation of nation-states, where different nations or nationalities are now known to have different languages. Metaphorical Field involves a conceptual model quite different from ‘Set’ in mathematics. Whereas a Set can be represented by a single circle, a Metaphorical Field is most properly seen as a number of non-concentric circles, intersecting one another with shared regions, containing some similar words. When those similar words come from neighbouring countries, they are normally termed cognates. Let us take one more illustrative example about Metaphorical Field using the word ‘SEA’.

Noting that ‘Sea’ has main equivalents in other languages by words having initial [M] {Mer, Mare, etc} or [B] {Byon, Biển, Briny, etc}, it can be seen that a metaphorical field generated by:

- **SEA** would have: Salt, Saline, Sand (Sable {French}; Sa {Sino-Vietnamese}), Salty, Shore, Shoal, Shingle, Seal, Storm, Sông (Wave), San-hó (Coral), etc.
- **BRINY** (Biển) ⇒ Beach (Bãi biển), Bay (Vịnh [19]), Bank (B cô), Billow, Blue, Breaker, Brine, Buoy, Bubble, Bão (Storm), etc.
• MER (la) => Marine, Maritime, Marlin, Mermaid, Marinate, Muối (Salt), Mặn (Salty), Mắm (Salted fish), etc.

It follows from the examples on Metaphorical Field above, that:

(i) Metaphorical Field could be the primary mechanism of lexical generation in ancient times, when language had not yet become a property or asset of individuals or nations. That was the time when a written language was still at its formative stage, normally characterized by lack of distinction between similar sounds, such as bilabial initial [M] (in ‘la Mer’) and [B] (in ‘Biển’) [21], or the meaning of words or morphemes was still imprecise, not as crisp as later developed. It was the time that each basic word still seemed to emanate a lot of meanings and ‘interpretation’ surrounding the core object or phenomenon or act, that the word was used to describe.

(ii) Associated with a field of meanings emanating from a generic word in ancient times, is the problem of shift in meaning, often observable from Vietnamese lexicon. For example, the word ‘AI’ mentioned above originally may have been used (by certain groups) to denote the first personal pronoun (I / Me = tôi), but over time it is shifted to an interrogative position meaning ‘Who’ in English. Likewise, number 6 is still recorded in the Champa language as ‘Năm’, which is now used in Vietnamese to denote number 5.

(iii) Metaphorical field is characterized by mixing tongues of different ‘ethnic’ groups, resulting in one sub-field using generic word coming from another group, or other groups. It is suggested that such tongue mixing has long obscured the underlying mechanics of metaphorical field, whilst often manifesting as cognates or etymons. In the example above, Vietnamese words: Muối (Salt), Mặn (Salty), Mắm (Salted fish), were derived metaphorically from some word meaning ‘Sea’, using initial [M] (‘Mer’ (F) or [Men] (Hakka)), whereas the main Vietnamese word for ‘Sea’, Biển, relied on lexical category with initial [B], as in ‘Briny’, ‘Bpinle’ (Burmese), ‘Byon’ and ‘Bada’ (Korean). As metaphorical field primarily involves the mixing of different languages in the process, a particular set of lexicon in any language corresponding to a metaphorical field would be most likely extensive.

(iv) As shown in Table I of the Appendix, identification of similar sounds for words having similar meaning, but separated over long distance would comprise the first step in analysis of metaphorical field. Such identification would also lend support to dispel an old time myth about similarity in sounds (especially ‘Initials’) over long distance being manifestation of ‘cognates’ between vastly different language families. In other words, cognates may not be strictly cognates, and loan words did not actually come from borrowing, but same set of words contributed by the ancient lexicon ‘proprietors’ to different yet-to-be countries, to form different national languages at a much later stage.

(v) At a surface level, metaphorical field is consistent or overlapping with other linguistic classifications, such as Derivational Morphemes (practice =>
practicality), or simple Metaphors (an ape => to ape; eye => eye of a needle // Mớm (com) {Feeding rice to baby} => Mớm (lời) {to prompt an answer to someone}), etc. Its main focus however is on lexical generation in ancient times, when a new word would be a great invention having big impact on the advancement of communal life around the globe. Such invention of new words is often characterized by the mixing of different generic terms belonging to different lexicon proprietor groups, sometimes separated over long distance.

On examination of Table I of the Appendix it can be seen also that metaphorical field appears to be an innate human faculty, in that it is an ongoing process through centuries and millennia, as evidenced by the presence of more ‘recent’ vocabulary like: Buy, Peace, Silk, Talk, Vestige, etc.

Metaphorical Field is in fact intimately linked with the Tree-and-Soil model, proposed in [3] to explain formation of Vietnamese. Basically the model considers the Vietnamese language as an evolutionary product having many different constitutive components from various ethnicities’ lexicons, or even languages. Two neighbouring countries are analogous to two adjacent trees. Types and sources of nutrients and minerals from the soil, as food for growth, may be very similar, but individual amounts absorbed by tree roots, and their composition distribution are naturally different between the two trees.

The model, inherently, is not dated back to the initial period covered by Genesis, but is primarily concerned with known history of the human race, and interactions among different groups, in the past four millennia or so. In other words, in lieu of searching where the ancient Vietnamese, as a single group, migrated from in the long past, it proposes to examine the various ethnicities with their own lexicon and tongues, that most likely inhabited or migrated to the land known today as Vietnam. In the process the tongues were mixed, and evolved into Vietnamese with some groups becoming more predominant than others.

One salient feature of the model is that it can reconcile many an irregularity often found in the past, not only in linguistic data but also those pertaining to anthropological, cultural or historical observations (For detail, see [3]). As an example, consider an Indonesian or Malay saying: ‘Seperti tikus jatuh ke beras’, meaning ‘A mouse falling into a rice bin’, which is very similar to Vietnamese: ‘Chuột sa hũ nếp’, metaphorizing ‘An undeserving fellow finding a fortune by sheer luck’. Or: Similarities between Thai and Vietnamese in [Chai] and ‘Xài’ denoting both ‘to use’ and ‘to spend money’; and ‘[Khaow] and ‘Gao’ (or ‘Com’) for both ‘Rice’ and ‘Meal’. Or: A delicacy known as ‘Balut’ (Filippino) or ‘trứng vịt lộn’, being incomplete fertilized duck eggs, known to be very popular in the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Another example, mentioned in the work on the Mường by Jeanne Cuisinier [8], is a folklore about a queen after death, turning into a fairy with the help of a pair of golden fish. The folklore was found in both Hoà Binh (Vietnam) and Putri Sadong (Malaysia), which is peculiar in that Putri Sadong is not a limestone
country like Hoà Bình and yet the local folklore referred to limestone features.

Explanation from the Tree-and-Soil model for all these similarities would be that in the long past, before state formation, there were some groups with common denominator in ethnicity, being proprietors of those lexicon, customs, or cultural traits, inhabiting in, or migrating to, various lands in Southeast Asia. Like the Irish, the Greeks, the Italians, etc. emigrated, some to America, some to Australia, some to New Zealand, etc., in recent centuries. Later on, descendants of these groups in various localities became constitutive ‘components’, and merged with other local groups to form different states. The luggage of language, culture, tradition, worship, food, etc. carried with them, or inherited from their ancestors, became asset of, or identified with, the new country they formed a part. It should be noted that until the present, every ethnicity in Asia has an average of 10 different sub-ethnic groups, as evidenced by a large number of sub-dialects found in Hakka, Miao-Yao, Fujian, Zhuang, Wu, etc. Consequently some sub-ethnic groups ‘made it’ to the mainstream society, some preferred not to. Those opting for life as it used to be, eventually became ethnic minorities. This could explain the different ways of metaphorizing colors between different countries and even regions in the same country, such as White from Rice in Thailand, and from the Moon in Vietnam, as described above.

Another important corollary coming from the Tree-and-Soil model and Metaphorical field is consistent with findings in genetics, anthropology, and other related sciences, in that the variation of genetic make-up within a population is more widespread than that between neighbouring national populations. In detail, consider the ethnicity make-up of two neighboring countries as \{A1+B1+C1+others\} and \{A2+B2+C2+others\}, respectively, where A1 and A2, are of the same ethnicity but at different composition percentages, in country 1 and country 2, respectively. Likewise for: B1 and B2, C1 and C2, respectively. Any statistical analysis on the genetic make-up would most likely result in variance within one country, being higher than that between the two countries.

Metaphorology

From the foregoing discussion, it can be suggested that study of metaphorical field, hereinafter called ‘Metaphorology’, would give us an opportunity to go into the thinking process of human beings in the long past. In a general sense, metaphorology also looks at the origin of words like etymology, but at a different angle, and theoretical framework. Most importantly, its main premise is centered, not on lexical borrowing, but on different constitutive tongues when a national language was still at a formative stage. It goes into the Chomkyan deep structure, as applied to the lexicon.

There is a variety of benefits to be gained from metaphorology, apart from probing into the lexical deep structure. These include:

(i) To gain a better understanding how nation-states were formed, especially with
respect to ethnicity components in a country. As a result, some inference can be made as to the kind of unwritten social and ‘citizenship’ policy, prevalent in the past. In this regard, it seemed that something equivalent to an ‘oath of allegiance’ to the new land would be of utmost importance, apart from loyalty to clan or tribe. As such, every settler or inhabitant had to forsake the root of their clan, or at least its memory easily became blurred, or even lost, especially in the absence of a well-developed written language.

(ii) The way vocabulary was generated. For example: **Bụng** (Belly) \(\Rightarrow\) **Bầu** (pregnant) \(\Rightarrow\) **Bầu** (Gourd) – as gourd has similar shape to belly during pregnancy.

(iii) Long distance similarities between phonemes having similar initial and meaning, from different languages or families. From this, analysis and classification can be made about ‘lexicon proprietors’ being speakers of certain sets of lexicon, normally overlapped, present at different localities around the globe. In other words, ancient and basic lexicon could have been transferred progressively in chain, under different strands, and inter-ethnically, rather than through migratory movement of a particular group of speakers. For example, for words related to ‘Sea’, there are about three main ‘strands’, one with initial ‘B’ (Briny, Byon, Bpinle, [Bin], Bién), one with ‘M’ (Mer, Mare, Marine, Muối (Salt)), and one with ‘S’ (Sea, Zee, Sand, Sjór, See). Each strand would be within the mother tongue of a particular group, participating and mixing with other strands (groups) in forming a national language.

(iv) To provide a check on the way certain words were pronounced in the past even for a particular lexicon proprietor group within a national language. For example, the Table in the Appendix illustrated another way, through metaphorology, of verifying the initial used in some words spelled under alphabetic **quốc-ngữ** as ‘V’ (vỡ (broken), vú (breast), vui (joy)), in addition to checking with **Nôm** script, etc.

The following example will serve to illustrate how metaphorology can reveal certain conceptualization made by ancient people about simple lexicon, and to conclude this paper.

Consider words like ‘to marry / marriage’. What did ancient people actually refer to when they first coined them?

First, it is noted that in Indonesia as well as in parts of Vietnam, people have the habit of calling the Husband or the Wife as ‘My House’: **Nhà tôi** (Vietnamese) & **Rumah Saya** (Indonesian). ‘House’ is equivalent to [wu] Mandarin, [vuk] Hakka, [ok] Fujian, [o?] Wu, [uk] Cantonese, and [óe] Sino-Vietnamese. Hakka’s [vuk] could have transformed into [vợ], assisted by **quốc-ngữ** coding.

The Chinese language also referred to Wife as House or Room: **室** [shi] as in [zheng
shi] (chánh thất) meaning the ‘principal’ wife. Formal Vietnamese words for ‘marriage’ could also be: lập gia đình Or: lập gia thất, where ‘lập’ generally means ‘to form’ and both gia đình and gia thất refer to the House.

Many languages, Southeast Asian included, have a strong tendency to derive words describing the Wife, through two steps. The first step as mentioned above is to think through a metaphorical field to include the Sea and the Mother, as ‘Very Big Object (or Being)’. And the second step, calling Wife as Mother (Mum / Mợ or Mả nó), or Husband as Father (Dad / Bố or Ba nó) has long become human speech habit, in the East as well as the West.

Mother as a metaphorical field element of Sea (or vice versa), can be exemplified through many different languages: Madre / Mare (Italian), Mère / Mer (French), [Mou] / [Hai] (Mandarin) both written with the [mou] (mother) radical, etc. Under a field comprising all the three: Mother (Bu/Mère), Sea (Biển/Mer), and Very Big Being (Bu/Magnifique), as discussed above, words for Mother include: iBu (Indonesian) {relating to ‘Big’ / ‘Biển’ (Sea)}, Me {Thai / Viet}, and a large number of Southern Chinese dialects with sound around [Pu] or [Bu], or [Bo] [lao bo]. In the Southern variety of Vietnamese [Bu] approaches [Byợ] very easily, which later on was merged with [vợ] under the alphabetic quốc ngữ. [Bu] also gave rise to ‘Bố’ indicating the Father during transition from matrilineal to patrilineal system.

At this stage, it is clear that:

- In ancient times, the Wife was first ‘conceptualized’ as something very concrete, such as the House, or Manager of the House.
- Wife, as a being or a word, was also not totally distinct from Mother, or more precisely, a being capable of becoming Mother of the man’s children.
- Word description for Mother may be shifted to Father, or Wife to Husband, during or after transition from matrilineal to patrilineal system. For example: Bu = Mother => Bố = Father. Mari (French) => Husband (from Mère).
- Word for Mother, in many languages, East and West, is metaphorically linked with word for the Sea, or a very Big Being (or Object).

It can thus be seen that English words relating to ‘to marry’ or ‘marriage’ originated from metaphorical field of the Sea / Mother. ‘Marriage’ originally was coined to mean: to bring home a Manager, or a ‘grand’ Being capable of becoming Mother of the man’s children. In short, the word ‘to marry’ has an element ‘Mare’ (or Mère) meaning Mother, which in turn is metaphorically related to the Sea, or something very Big. ‘To marry’ could give rise to the adjective ‘Merry’, being descriptive of the state of mind, body, and soul of the couple on the day of their marriage celebration.

Vietnamese translation for St Mary or the Virgin Mary, Đức Mẹ đồng trinh, would say it all, in that Mẹ (Mother) is the only and direct transliteration of ‘Mary’.
### APPENDIX: Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Other languages</th>
<th>Some metaphorical links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>Bé</td>
<td>Bébé (F), bayi (In)</td>
<td>bông, bê (carry), bù (suck)…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belly</td>
<td>Bung</td>
<td>Bauch (G), Buk (S)</td>
<td>bung =&gt; bâu (pregnant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Biếc, bích</td>
<td>Lam (Ha), Biru (In)</td>
<td>brien =&gt; biérc, bích. Also: lam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Bể,vỡ(byỡ)</td>
<td>Briser (F), brechen (G)</td>
<td>bể =&gt; bừa (plow), bưa (chop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big</td>
<td>Bự</td>
<td>büyük (Tk),большой (R)</td>
<td>biển (sea) =&gt; bự, bác (gross)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>Vú (Byú)²</td>
<td>Breast (D), Seio (P/B)²</td>
<td>Breast=&gt;bra. Buý=&gt;Bú(suck²)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Kê, gà³</td>
<td>[kaybe] (Ca), [cao] (F), [gai] (Ha)</td>
<td>=&gt; [gáy (chirp), galinha (P)³]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear</td>
<td>Dắt</td>
<td>Dyr (N), dyr (Ic), dài (La)</td>
<td>Mahal(In)&gt;&gt;mạc (expensive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dense</td>
<td>Đơn, đảm</td>
<td>Des (Ro), denso (P)</td>
<td>Dim ~ đ饈 (night, dark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Bôi = Vui²</td>
<td>Gioia (I),[dʒoi] IPA, joie (F)</td>
<td>Bôi=&gt;[byôi]/[byui]=&gt;[dʒoi]⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungle</td>
<td>Rừng³</td>
<td>Dżungle (Cz), [zeon] (Ca)</td>
<td>Some Viet dialects: [j] ~ [r] ³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud</td>
<td>Lớn (La)</td>
<td>Laut (G), luit (D)</td>
<td>Possible link: langue (lưỡi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Lùn</td>
<td>Lijenk (D), lassen (G)</td>
<td>Lijsen/lassen = make small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Land (N)</td>
<td>Land (N), ład (Po)</td>
<td>lãnh thổ, lục địa (continent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Lớn, lớn</td>
<td>Liels (L), mare (R)</td>
<td>lớn (rộng= wide). Mare= sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung</td>
<td>Phổi</td>
<td>Poumon(F), Πνεύμονας (Gr)</td>
<td>[pui] Chinese pinyin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Mán, mwai</td>
<td>Bárbar (Ro), mąż (R), man (N)</td>
<td>Mán= Chinese [man] =&gt; barbarian. ‘Mwai’ (Mường)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosquito</td>
<td>Muỗi</td>
<td>Mug (D), moustique (F)</td>
<td>Mùng / màn= mosquito net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine</td>
<td>Mỏ (hầm)</td>
<td>Mijn (D), gruve (N), mine (F)</td>
<td>hàm=&gt;hang(cave), grotte (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry</td>
<td>Mừng</td>
<td>Munter (Da), munter (S)</td>
<td>Joyeux (F)=&gt; Joy. Vui mừng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me/mine</td>
<td>Minh (cúa)</td>
<td>Moi/mien (F), mind (Es)</td>
<td>Mım (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mare</td>
<td>Mả (S-V)</td>
<td>Márr (S), măra (Es)</td>
<td>Horse: gHoraa (H). Ngo/ Ngáa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>Nák, nước</td>
<td>Nazione (I), natie (D)</td>
<td>nước =&gt; non</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groin</td>
<td>Hạng</td>
<td>Hanche (F)</td>
<td>Close to French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>Phân (S-V)</td>
<td>Padi (ML)</td>
<td>Phàn= bowl [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Bán</td>
<td>[Pan] (Ca)</td>
<td>[p] =&gt; [ban] (Cant. =&gt; Viet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Bình (hoá)</td>
<td>[Píng] (M)</td>
<td>[p] =&gt; [b] (Chinese =&gt; Viet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root</td>
<td>Rễ</td>
<td>Racine (F), rot (Da), raak (Th)</td>
<td>Rê (dust off), râu (beard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand</td>
<td>Sa (S-V)</td>
<td>Sable (F), zand(D): zee= sea</td>
<td>Cát. Sandstone= Sa-thạch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sav</td>
<td>Thuyết (nói)</td>
<td><a href="Ca">Seoi</a>,<a href="M">shuo</a>,dire(F)</td>
<td>=&gt; sing = ca &lt;= cantare (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send</td>
<td>Tông</td>
<td>[Song] (M)</td>
<td>Viet [T] ~ Chinese [S]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk</td>
<td>Tơ</td>
<td>[Si] (Mandarin)</td>
<td>[St] (M) &lt;= Tơ (Viet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sing</td>
<td>Xướng (S-V)</td>
<td>Chanter (F), laulaa (Fi)</td>
<td>=&gt; song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit</td>
<td>Tọa</td>
<td>[Tso] (Ca), [zuø] (M).</td>
<td>Site, situated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Lâu</td>
<td>Lente (F), langsom (Da)</td>
<td>Long, slack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Tán, tận-man</td>
<td>Tan-tan (M), tala (S, Ic)</td>
<td>=&gt; Tale, tell, teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Thi giờ</td>
<td>Tijd (D), jam (In)</td>
<td>Also:Thời gian.Thời đại (era)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vestige</td>
<td>Vết tích</td>
<td>Vestigium(La), vestigio (Sp)</td>
<td>vết thương(injury), theo (scar)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:**

Vietnamese.

1. [Byỡ] is Southern dialect pronunciation for Northern and quốc-ngữ ‘vỡ’, with synonym ‘Bê’. As ‘Bê’ is closer to ‘Byŏ’ [βŏ] it can be seen that spelling ‘vỡ’ for ‘to break /broken’ could be entirely product of quốc-ngữ (Alphabetic Vietnamese). By consulting a Nôm script dictionary, it will be clear that the majority of Nôm spelling for ‘Vỡ’ incorporated a radical Bì (meaning Skin), with emphasis on Initial ‘B’. Also, the first Vietnamese (quốc-ngữ) dictionary in 1651, by Alexandre de Rhodes [11] showed spelling for ‘Vồ’ equivalent to [βो] {i.e. [Byŏ]}, confirming replacement of [β] by [V] taking place during quốc-ngữ development.

2. ‘Vú’ meaning ‘Breast’ has Southern pronunciation [βú], i.e. [Byú] (same initial ‘B’ as ‘Breast’), indicates again that ‘Vú’ could also be product of quốc-ngữ development in spelling. The original pronunciation would be much closer to the Southern dialect, as one of ‘Vú’’s metaphorical link is ‘Bú’ (with initial ‘B’) meaning ‘To suck’. Also, according to Alexandre de Rhodes’ dictionary, spelling for ‘Vú’ is equivalent to [βú] {i.e. [Byú]}. Vietnamese word for ‘Milk’ is ‘Sữa’, close to Indonesian ‘Susu’ and far-away Turkish: [Süt]. ‘Sùa’ also seems to have metaphorical link with Portuguese (Brazil) ‘Seio’ meaning ‘Breast’. It is also interesting to note that words like Jeans, Trousers, Panties, etc are normally used in the Plural (a Pair of), whilst the word ‘Bra’ metaphorically related to ‘Breast’ would stay in the Singular as ‘Breast’, possibly for the reason that a baby sucking milk would require only one breast at a time.

3. ‘Chicken’ => Gà {Hakka: [gai]}. ‘Chicken’ has some link with ‘to chirp’ (gáy) which in Vietnamese, goes to ‘Chim’ (Bird). Second syllable of ‘Chicken’ seems to be linked with Sino-Vietnamese ‘Kê’ or Cantonese [Kay]. The other word ‘Gà’ has a long-distance ‘cognate’ in Portuguese ‘Galinha’, and a metaphorical link with ‘gáy’ (to chirp, coo). The Zodiac sign represented by the ‘Rooster’ is called Dậu with Cantonese [Yau] and Hakka [Ju] or [Jiu], having strong correlation in sound with ‘Juje’ (Persian), and ‘Ayam’ (Indonesian), indicating the Chicken.

4. Vui = Merry / Happy. Nôm script used ‘Bôi’ as written form for ‘Vui’. The Alexandre de Rhodes dictionary [11] coded ‘Vui’ as [βui] being equivalent to Southern pronunciation [Byui]. Among Vietnamese and Chinese dialects there is some sound correspondence between [Dz] and [Y], similar to French & English: jeune/young, jaune/yolk, joug/yoke, japper/yap, jodler/yodel, and thus: Bôi / Bui, yielded [βui], which under [Dz] & [Y] correspondence, in turn, would result in sound: [dʒuɪ], very close to ‘Joy’ in English or ‘Joie’ in French.

5. Another word for jungle is ‘Forest’ with Thai equivalent [pa] and Vietnamese [pha] (e.g. xông pha: to advance through forest (risking danger) - {ph => f}).

6. ‘Smell’, in accordance with the present analysis, has metaphorical link with another group of words (from other tongues) for ‘Nose’ having initial ‘M’: Mũi (Vietnamese), μῦττη (Greek, μ= M), and [ch’Muk] (Thai).
REFERENCES & NOTES


[16] Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary (Beta Version), (C) 2000-2006 K Dictionaries Ltd

[17] Similarly, the French verb ‘tailler’ meaning ‘to cut’, when splitting out the verb ending ‘er’: [taill]+[er], would give the front syllable a sound similar to Asian languages or dialects meaning ‘to sever, to cut, to separate’: ‘tách’, [dtaht] (Thai), [tak] or [tac] (Hakka, Min-Yue & Mon-Khmer).

[18] Vietnamese [To] (big) came from Thai [dtoh] which in turn could be a cognate of Chinese [da] {dai}. 

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Southern dialect pronunciation: [Byính]

Another word for ‘Ocean / Sea’ is ‘Đường’ equivalent to Chinese [Yang] (Hakka: [Zang]) – which seems to have connection in sound with Dutch ‘Zee’ and Hebrew [Yam].

Examples of lack of distinction between sounds may include, in Asian languages, that between [d] and [t], [s] and [sh], [r] and [l], etc. Bilabial sounds [M] and [B] are very close in Vietnamese, such as ‘Buôn bán’ and ‘Mua bán’ (Buy-Sell) whereby the Fujian dialect relied on [B] for both [Bua], whereas others preferred only [M]: [mai] with different tones, for Buy & Sell. Another example is ‘Mouth’ (Mồm, Miệng) and French ‘Bouche’. Coming from ‘Mouth’, likely, is the French verb ‘manger’ meaning ‘to eat’, whereas sourcing from ‘bouche’ one can find French verb ‘bouvoir’ (to drink), ‘To bite’ or ‘a bite’ in English.