On the homeland of Karenic languages: from the perspective of plant names

Atsuhiko Kato

Keio University

Karenic is a branch of Tibeto-Burman. The ethnic groups that speak Karenic languages (called "Karenic peoples" here) include many groups, such as: Geba, Gek(h)o, Kayah, Kayaw, Kayan, Manu, Monebwa, Mopwa (Mobwa), Paku, Pa-O, Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen, Thalebwa, Yeinbaw, Yintale, and others (listed in alphabetical order).

Karenic peoples have a very wide range of cultures and lifestyles. There are Buddhists, Christians, and animists. Some of them live in the plains, while some others live in the mountainous areas. Some of the groups, especially Sgaw Karen and Pwo Karen, are engaged in an armed struggle against the Myanmar government. Even a single ethnic group can have a high degree of diversity.

Pwo Karen (left)
Sgaw Karen (right)

The ethnic "Karen",
in the narrowest
sense, is comprised
of Pwo and Sgaw.

(ဝဲ) ပဘိုးကရင်၊ (ယာ) စကောကရင်

(Left) Pao Karen: (Right) Sagaw Karen
↑ Not Pao, but Pwo (or Poe)

4

Pa-O

ပအိုး (တောင်သူ)အမျိုးသမီးများ (ရှမ်းပြည်တောင်ပိုင်း)

Pwo (Taungthu) Women (*Southern Shan State*)
↑ Not Pwo, but Pa-O (Taungthu)

Zayein

ဇယိမ်အမျိုးသား (ကယားပြည်နယ်)   Zayein (Kaungto) (Kayah State)

6

ယင်းေတာ်အမျိုးသမီးများ   (ကယားပြည်နယ်)

Yinbaw Women (*Kayah State*)

Bre

ဗရဲအမျိုးသမီး (ကယားပြည်နယ်)   Bre Woman (*Kayah State*)

Padaung (one of the groups of Kayan)

ပဒေါင်အမျိုးသမီးများ   (ကယားပြည်နယ်)

Padaung Women (*Kayah State*)

Yintale

ယင်းတလဲအမျိုးသမီး (ကယားပြည်နယ်)   Yintale Woman (*Kayah State*)

Kayah

ကယားအမျိုးသမီးများ (လွယ်ကော်)　　　Kayah Girls in Modern Dress (Loikaw)

Bwe
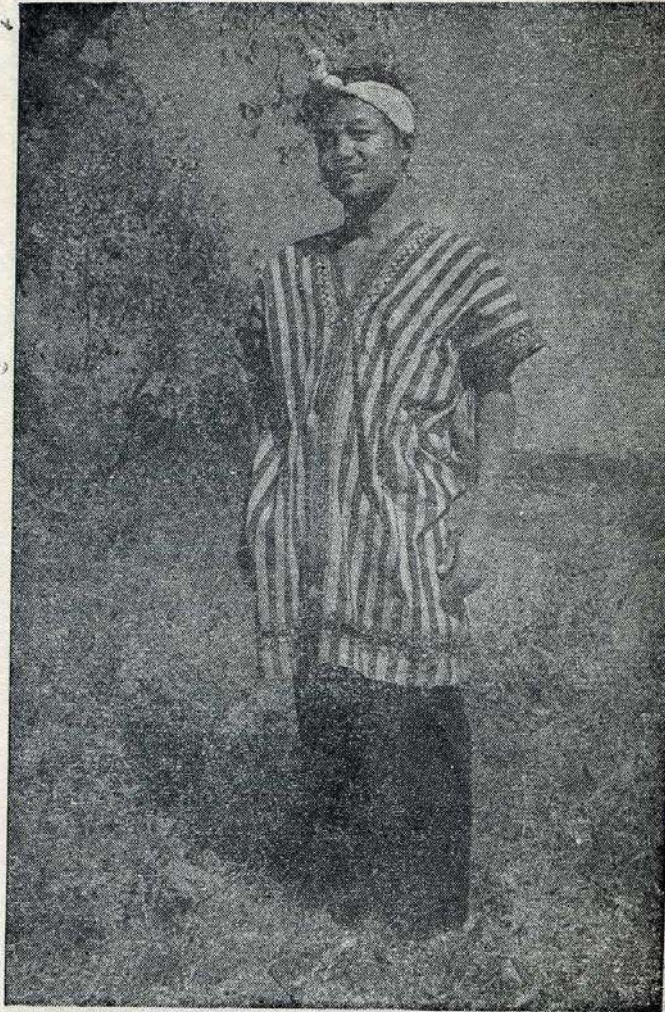
ဘွဲကရင် အမျိုးသား
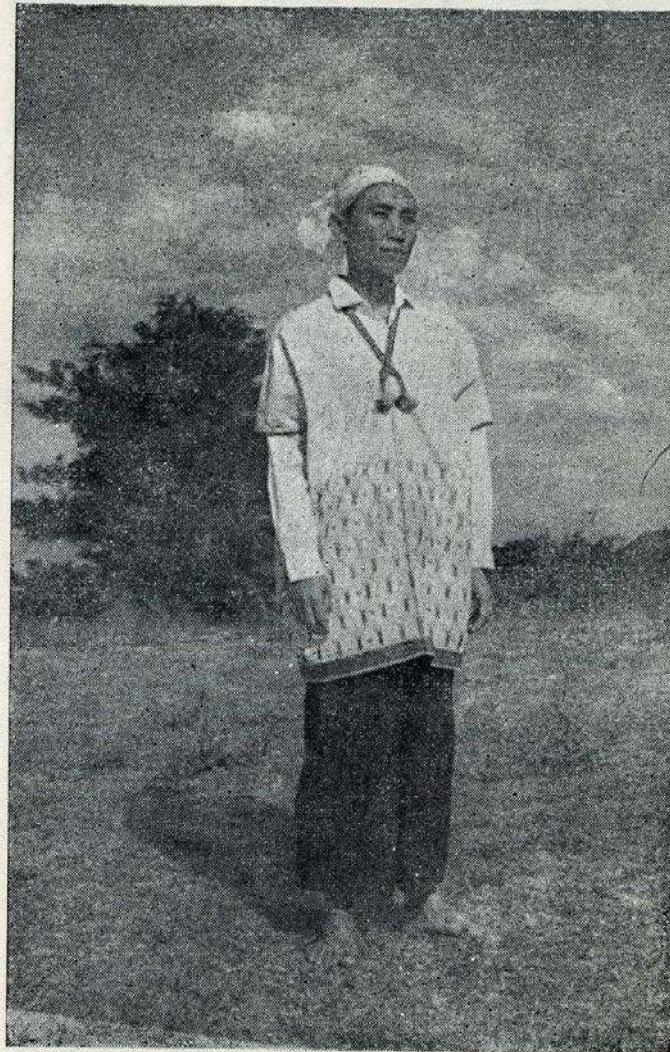
Paku

ပကူး ကရင် အမျိုးသား

Mopwa (Mobwa)

မိုပွာကရင်မိသားစု

Palaychi (one of the groups of Mopwa)

ပလၚ်း ကရင်အမျိုးသားနှင့် အမျိုးသမီး

Geba

ဂေဘား အမျိုးသား

Manumanaw

မနုမနော အမျိုးသမီးနှင့် အမျိုးသား

Gekho

ဂေခိုအမျိုးသမီး နှင့် အမျိုးသား

Ethnologue (22nd edition) lists 21
Karenic languages:

Bwe; Geba; Geko; Mobwa; Paku; Phrae
Pwo; Eastern Pwo; Northern Pwo;
Western Pwo; Sgaw Karen (spelled as
"S'gaw" in Ethnologue); Kawyaw; Eastern
Kayah; Western Kayah; Kayan; Kayaw;
Lahta; Pa-O; Wewaw; Yinbaw; Yintale;
and Zayein.

According to Ethnologue (22nd edition), the populations of these language-speaking groups are:

Sgaw (2,250,000)
Pwo (1,326,000)
Pa-O (858,740)
Kayah (178,000)
Kayan (133,180)
Geba (40,000)
Kayaw (20,100)
Bwe (17,200)
Geko (17,000)
Zayein (11,800)
Kawyaw (10,000)

Lahta (9,550)
Yinbaw (9,240)
Paku (6,710)
Mobwa (4,000)
Yintale (1,000)
Wewaw (extinct)

Karenic languages are of SVO-type. Below
are Eastern Pwo Karen examples:

nə	mə	ʔán	bá	kʊ́	ʔáʔá	lə́	jə	ɣéiɴ	phɔ̀ɴ	ɕī
2SG	IRR	to.eat	OPP	cake	much	LOC	1SG	house	inside	too

'You will also get a chance to eat a lot of cake inside my house.'

From Kato (2021)

já   phàdʊ́ jɛ̄ béiɴ   jò
fish big   five NC[flat] this
'these five big fish'
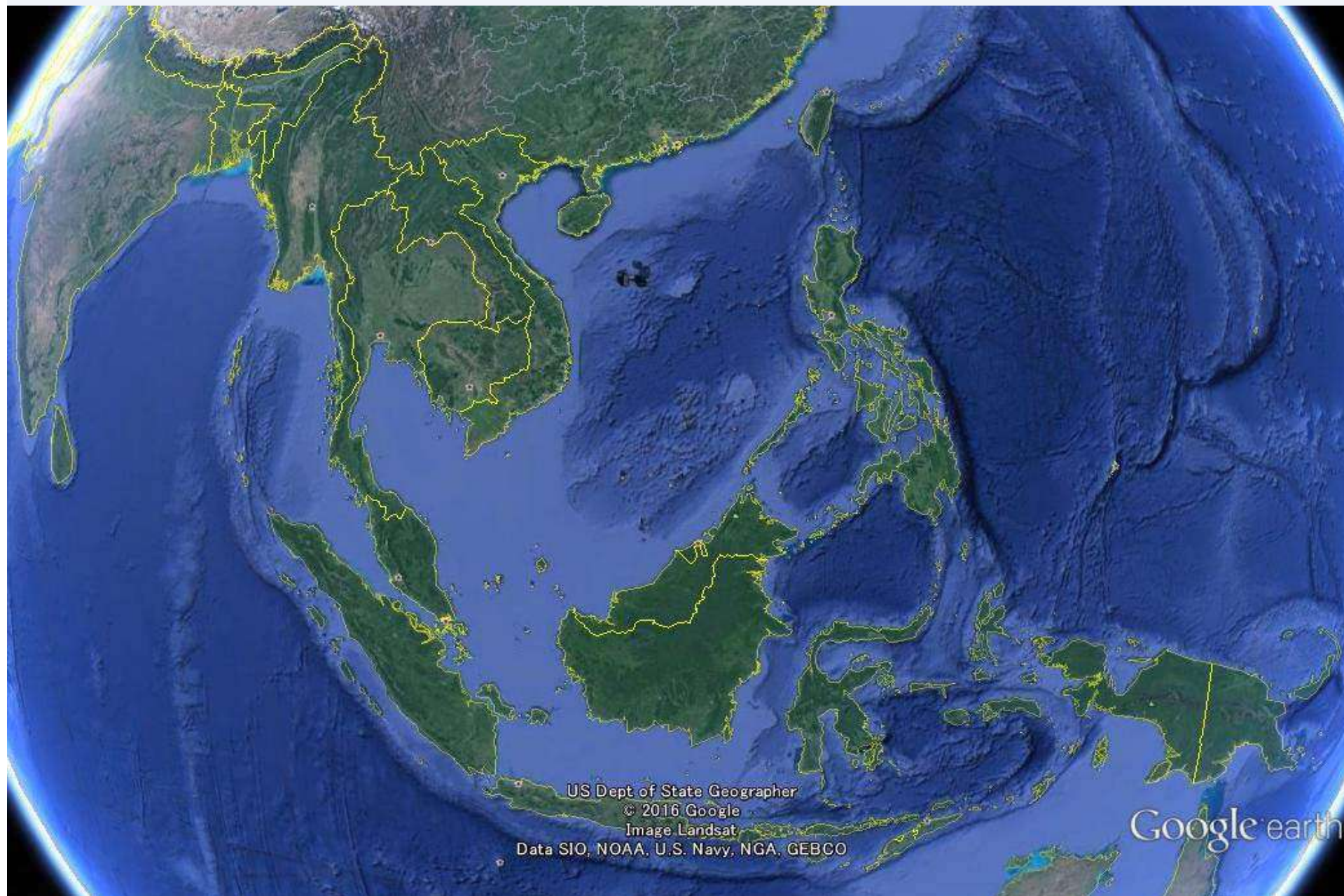
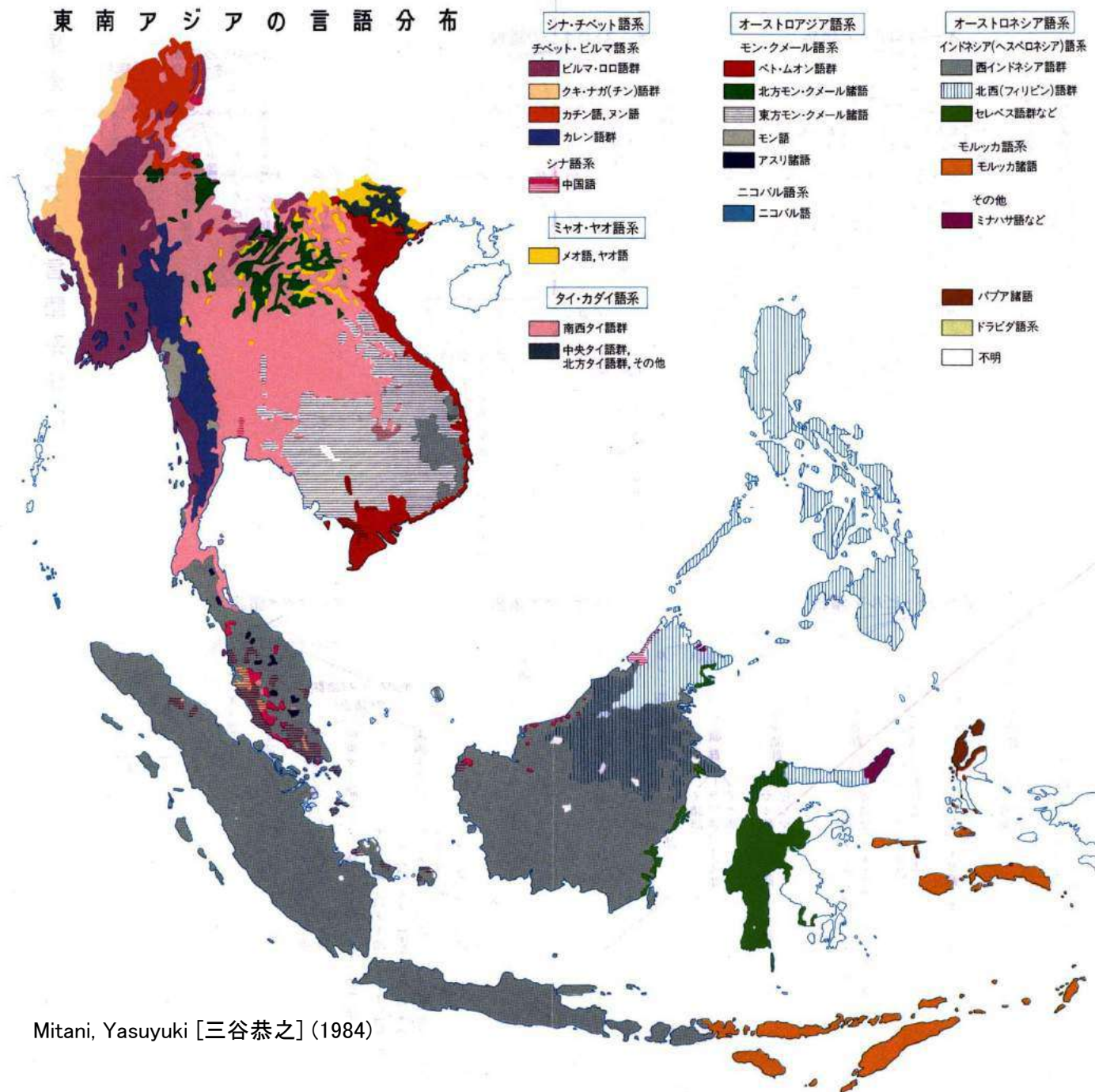東南アジアの言語分布

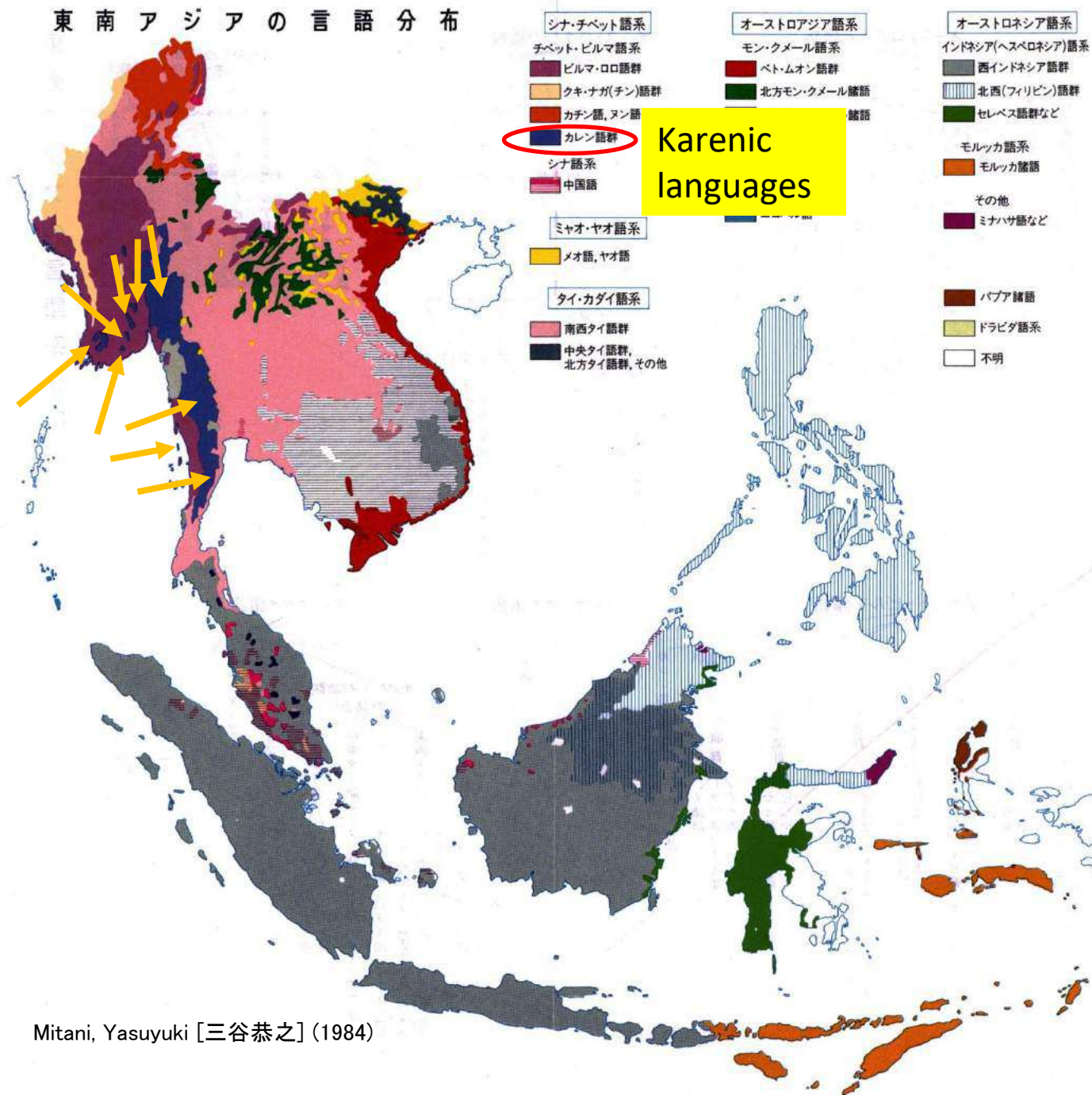| シナ・チベット語系	オーストロアジア語系	オーストロネシア語系
チベット・ビルマ系	モン・クメール語系	インドネシア(ヘスペロネシア)語系
■ ビルマ・ロロ語群	■ ベト・ムオン語群	■ 西インドネシア語群
■ クキ・ナガ(チン)語群	■ 北方モン・クメール諸語	⫴ 北西(フィリピン)語群
■ カチン語, ヌン語	■ 東方モン・クメール諸語	■ セレベス語群など
■ カレン語群	■ モン語	
シナ語系	■ アスリ諸語	モルッカ語系
■ 中国語	ニコバル語系	■ モルッカ諸語
	■ ニコバル語	その他
ミャオ・ヤオ語系		■ ミナハサ語など
■ メオ語, ヤオ語		
タイ・カダイ語系		■ パプア諸語
■ 南西タイ語群		■ ドラビダ語系
■ 中央タイ語群, 北方タイ語群, その他		□ 不明

Mitani, Yasuyuki [三谷恭之] (1984)

東南アジアの言語分布

Karenic languages

Mitani, Yasuyuki [三谷恭之] (1984)

Genealogical relationships within the Karenic languages
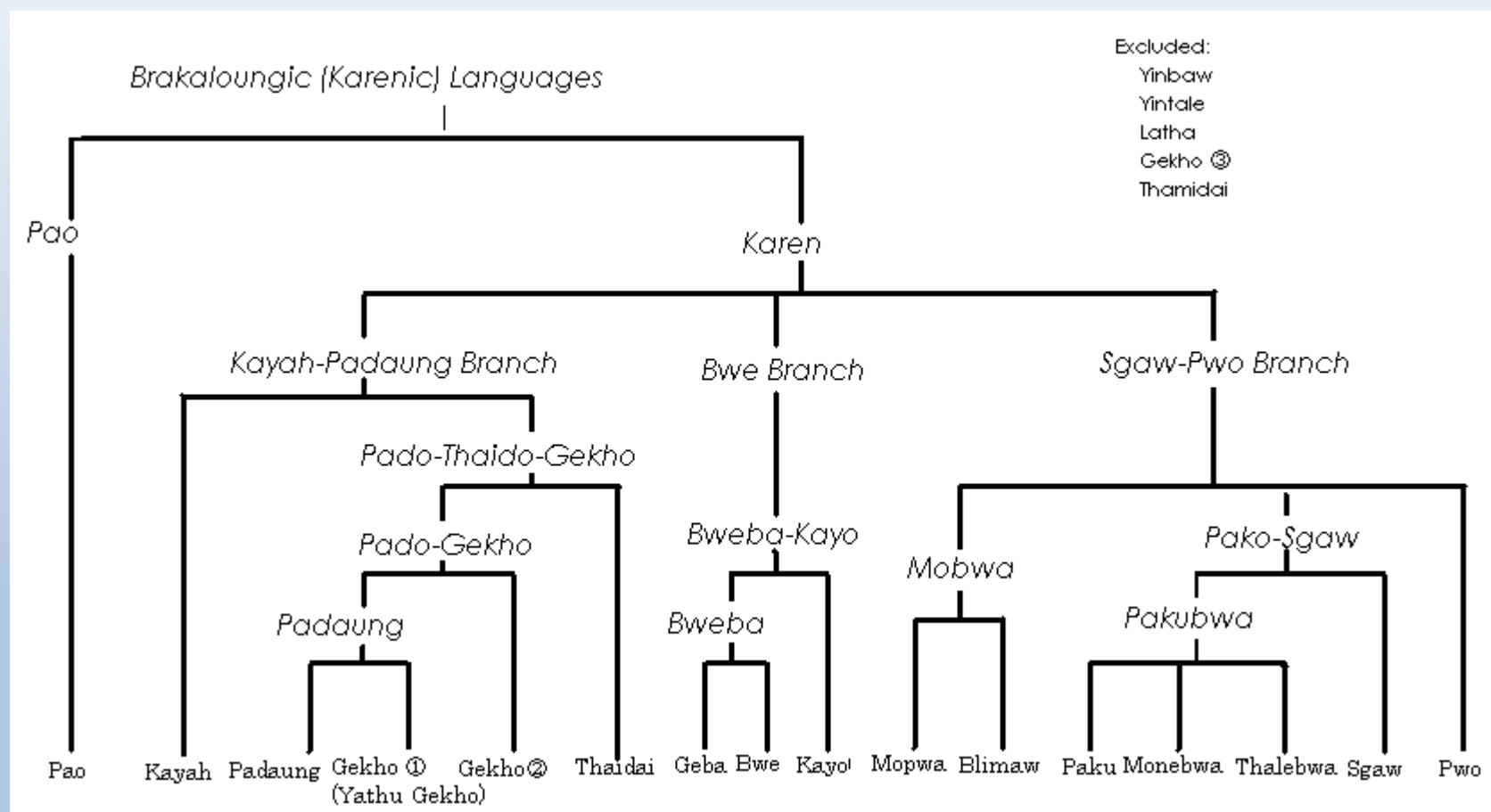
Shintani, Tadahiko L. A. (2003) Classification of Brakaloungic (Karenic) languages in relation to their tonal evolution. In Shigeki Kaji (ed.) *Proceedings of the Symposium Cross-linguistic Studies of Tonal Phenomena*, pp.37-54. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

Genealogical relationships within the Karenic languages
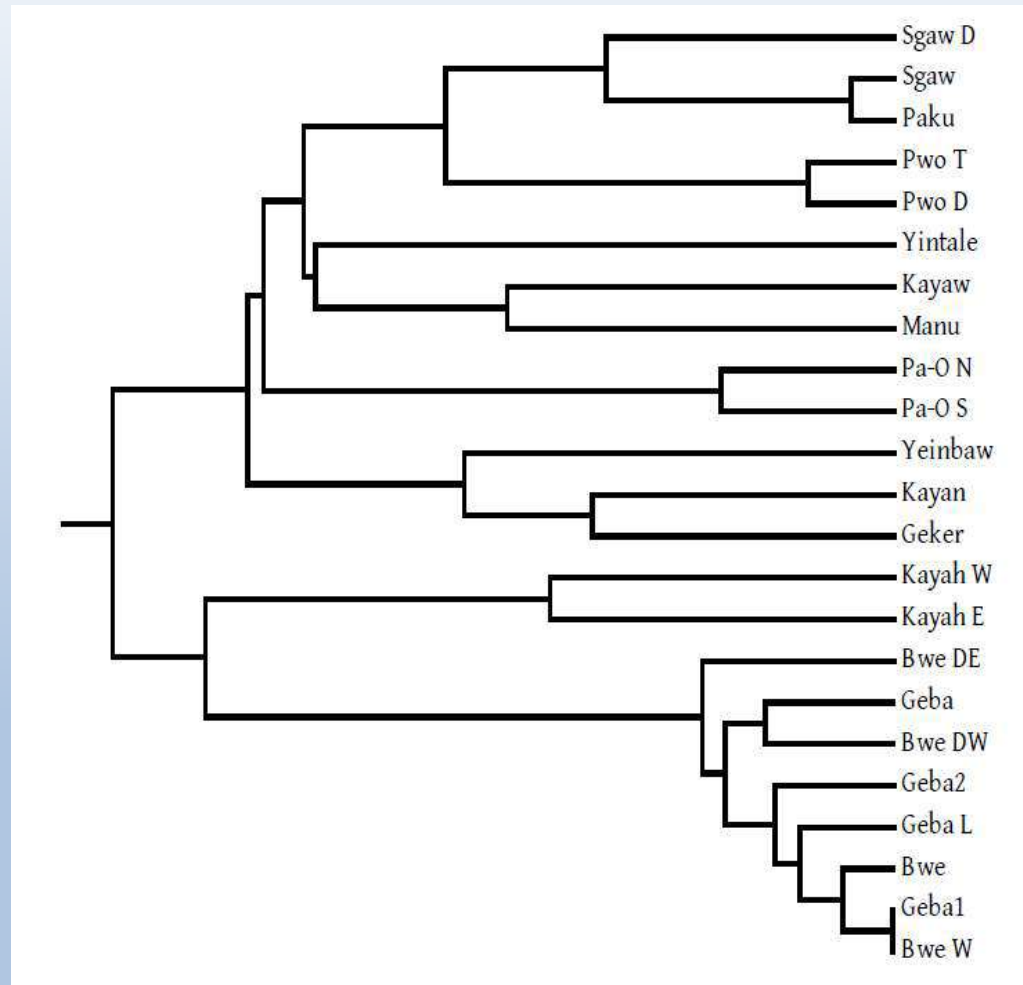
Manson, Ken. 2002. *Karenic Language Relationships: A Lexical and Phonological Analysis*. Chiang Mai: Department of Linguistics, Payap University.

Genealogical relationships within the Karenic languages
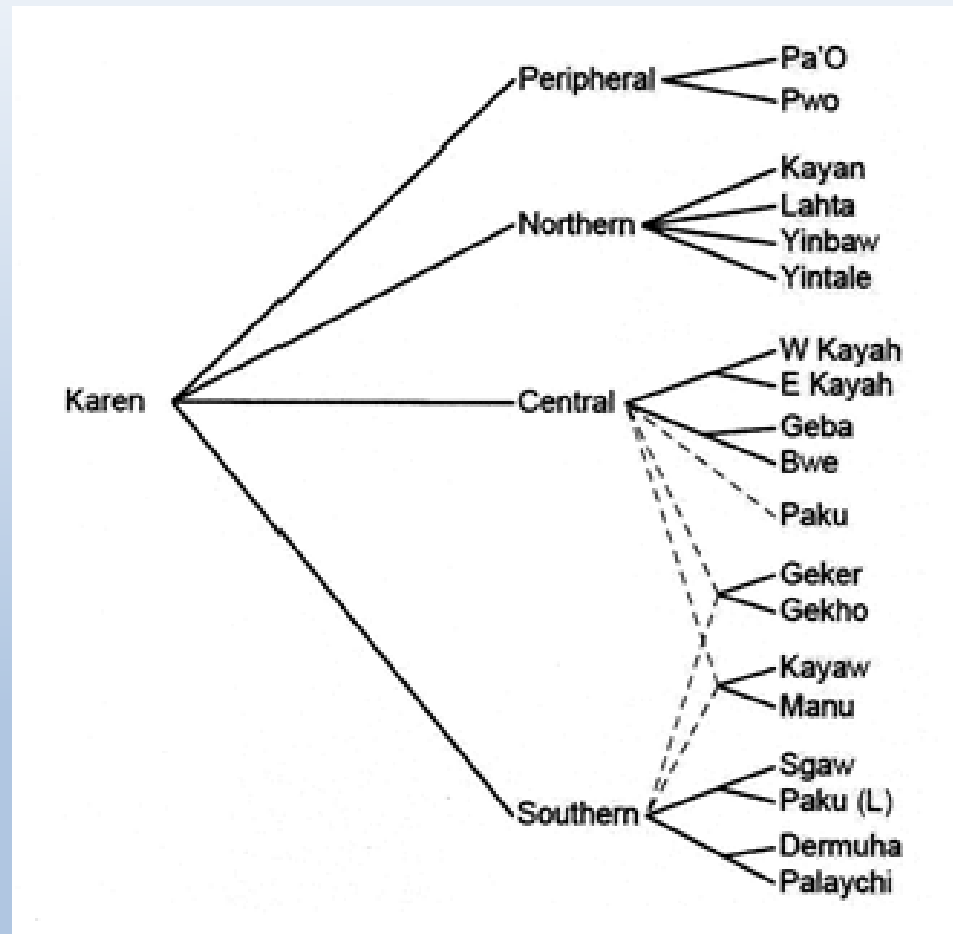
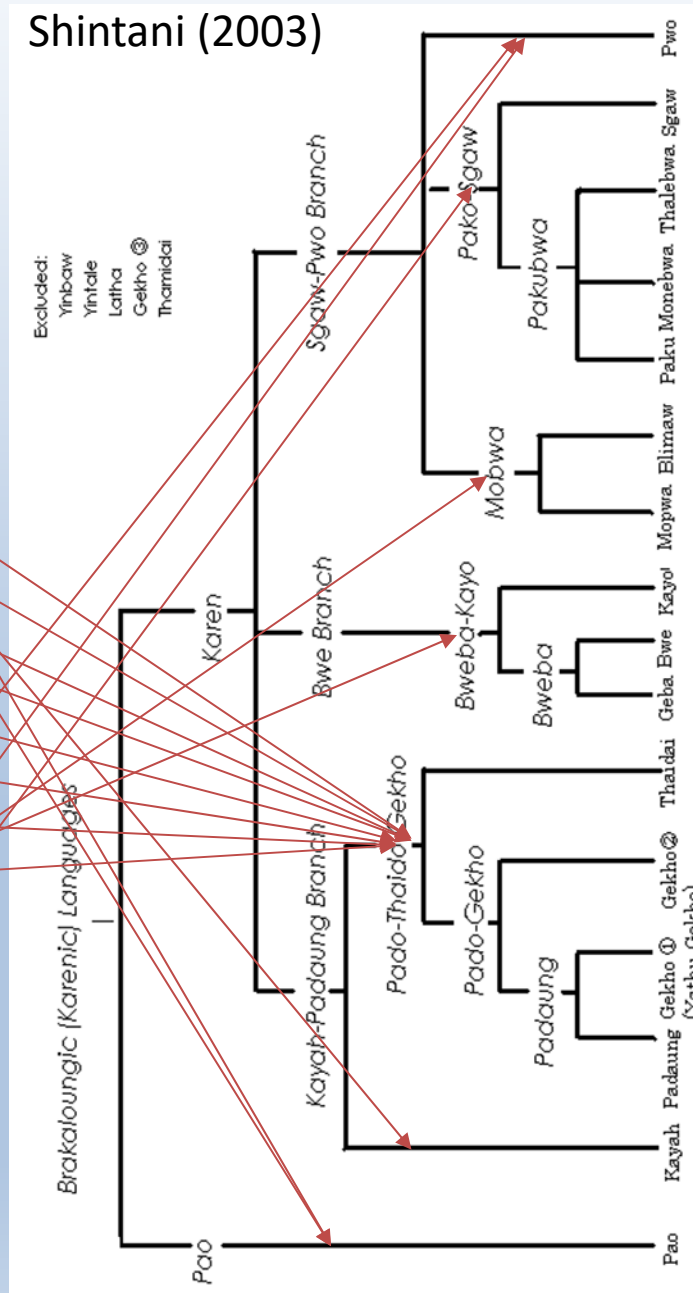Manson, Ken. 2017. The characteristics of the Karen branch of Tibeto-Burman. (In) Picus Sizhi Ding & Jamin Pelkey (eds.) *Sociohistorical Linguistics in Southeast Asia: New Horizons for Tibeto-Burman Studies in Honor of David Bradley*, pp. 149–168. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

Language names and sources	
Northern Pa-O	Shintani (2020b)
Southern Pa-O	Shintani (2020b)
Eastern Kayah Li	Solnit (1997)
Zayein	Shintani (2014)
Nangki	Shintani (2016)
Yingtalay	Shintani (2018a)
Thaidai	Shintani (2018b)
Sonkan Kayan	Shintani (2018c)
Dosanbu Kayan	Shintani (2018d)
Thamidai	Shintani (2020a)
Pekon Kayan	Manson (2010)
Bwe	Henderson (1997)
Blimaw	Shintani (2017)
Western Pwo Karen	My data
Eastern Pwo Karen	My data
Sgaw Karen	My data

In this study, I will use plant names from 16 languages listed in this table. The sources are shown in the right column.

*Note that Shintani's (2017) Blimaw is a different language from Henderson's (1997) Bwe, which is also called Blimaw.

Shintani (2003)

Language names
Northern Pa-O
Southern Pa-O
Eastern Kayah Li
Zayein
Nangki
Yingtalay
Thaidai
Sonkan Kayan
Dosanbu Kayan
Thamidai
Pekon Kayan
Bwe
Blimaw
Western Pwo Karen
Eastern Pwo Karen
Sgaw Karen

Excluded:
Yinbaw
Yintale
Latha
Gekho ⓧ
Thamidai

29

Manson (2002)

Language names
Northern Pa-O
Southern Pa-O
Eastern Kayah Li
Zayein
Nangki
Yingtalay
Thaidai
Sonkan Kayan
Dosanbu Kayan
Thamidai
Pekon Kayan
Bwe
Blimaw
Western Pwo Karen
Eastern Pwo Karen
Sgaw Karen

Tree labels: Sgaw D, Sgaw, Paku, Pwo T, Pwo D, Yintale, Kayaw, Manu, Pa-O N, Pa-O S, Yeinbaw, Kayan, Geker, Kayah W, Kayah E, Bwe DE, Geba, Bwe DW, Geba2, Geba L, Bwe, Geba1, Bwe W

?

30

Language names

Language names
Northern Pa-O
Southern Pa-O
Eastern Kayah Li
Zayein
Nangki
Yingtalay
Thaidai
Sonkan Kayan
Dosanbu Kayan
Thamidai
Pekon Kayan
Bwe
Blimaw
Western Pwo Karen
Eastern Pwo Karen
Sgaw Karen

Manson (2017)

Karen
- Peripheral
  - Pa'O
  - Pwo
- Northern
  - Kayan
  - Lahta
  - Yinbaw
  - Yintale
- Central
  - W Kayah
  - E Kayah
  - Geba
  - Bwe
  - Paku
  - Geker
  - Gekho
  - Kayaw
  - Manu
- Southern
  - Sgaw
  - Paku (L)
  - Dermuha
  - Palaychi

Language names
Northern Pa-O
Southern Pa-O
Eastern Kayah Li
Zayein
Nangki
Yingtalay
Thaidai
Sonkan Kayan
Dosanbu Kayan
Thamidai
Pekon Kayan
Bwe
Blimaw
Western Pwo Karen
Eastern Pwo Karen
Sgaw Karen
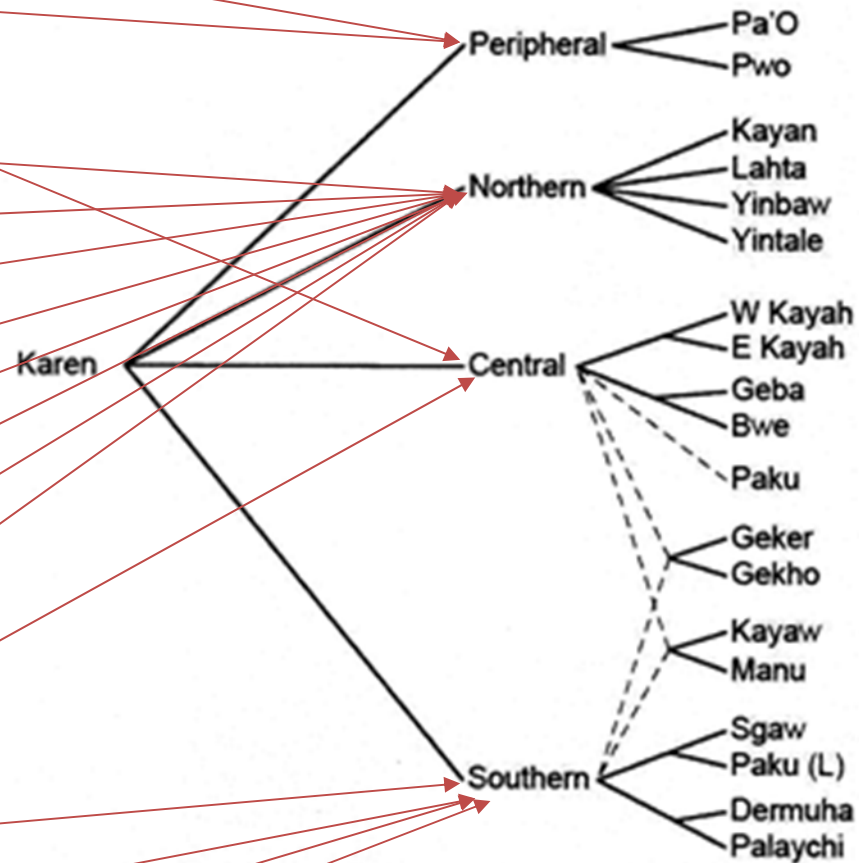
Northern Pa-O, Southern Pa-O — Pao

Eastern Kayah Li — Kayah

Zayein, Nangki, Yingtalay, Thaidai, Sonkan Kayan, Dosanbu Kayan, Thamidai, Pekon Kayan — Pado-Thaidai-Gekho

Bwe — Bweba-Kayo

Blimaw — Mobwa

Western Pwo Karen, Eastern Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen — Sgaw-Pwo

If we based on Shintani's (2003) classification, the sample languages belong to these branches or sub-branches. I separated Mobwa from Sgaw-Pwo because it seems slightly distant from either Sgaw or Pwo.

The plants treated in this study are:

bamboo

banyan

pine

rattan

coconut

teak

palmyra palm

banana

sugar cane

betel palm

mango

tamarind

jackfruit

Photos cited from:
Useful Tropical Plants Database
https://tropical.theferns.info/

33

We will see the relationships and origins of the names of these plants in the Karenic languages.

bamboo	
Northern Pa-O	wa34
Southern Pa-O	wa44
Eastern Kayah Li	ve
Zayein	va42
Nangki	va31
Yingtalay	va55
Thaidai	hua45
Sonkan Kayan	hua55
Dosanbu Kayan	hua55
Thamidai	hua42
Pekon Kayan	hwâ
Bwe	hʊ
Blimaw	wa̰33
Western Pwo Karen	wà [11]
Eastern Pwo Karen	wá [55]
Sgaw Karen	wâ [51]

All of the words are related to each other, and a Proto-Karen form can be reconstructed.

   *hwa (Matisoff 2003, 2015)
   *hwaᴮ (Luangthongkum 2019)

banyan	
Northern Pa-O	ŋɔŋ34
Southern Pa-O	kloŋ44
Eastern Kayah Li	---
Zayein	ʁo̰ṳn42
Nangki	sa31 klɔ31
Yingtalay	klou55
Thaidai	khlao45
Sonkan Kayan	khlou55
Dosanbu Kayan	khlou55
Thamidai	khlao42
Pekon Kayan	kʰlôn (STEDT)
Bwe	klo
Blimaw	xlɔ55
Western Pwo Karen	khlòuɴ [11]
Eastern Pwo Karen	khlóʊɴ [55]
Sgaw Karen	khlə̂ [51]

All of the words except the Northern Pa-O form are related to each other, and a Proto-Karen form can be reconstructed.

*khlo^B (Luangthongkum 2013; cited by Manson 2019)

Notes:
- I assume *khluŋ² for Proto-Karen.
- Manson (2019) reconstructs *kʰloɴ^B for Proto-Kayan.

36

pine	
Northern Pa-O	ŋo31
Southern Pa-O	---
Eastern Kayah Li	---
Zayein	ɲu55
Nangki	mei31 ŋou232
Yingtalay	ta33 ŋo53
Thaidai	thin33 ju33
Sonkan Kayan	ŋou31
Dosanbu Kayan	ŋou42
Thamidai	---
Pekon Kayan	nó
Bwe	---
Blimaw	thi55 ju44
Western Pwo Karen	---
Eastern Pwo Karen	chàʊpənâiɴ [11.1.51]
Sgaw Karen	shɣó [55]

The Thaidai and Blimaw forms are borrowings from Burmese.

Cf. Burmese /thínyú/ ထင်းရှူး

A number of languages have words beginning with [ŋ], but the etymology of these words is unknown.

We cannot reconstruct a proto-form for 'pine'.

rattan	
Northern Pa-O	rei53
Southern Pa-O	---
Eastern Kayah Li	rì (Solnit 2013)
Zayein	ʁei̤42
Nangki	ʔað232
Yingtalay	rɯi31
Thaidai	rei33
Sonkan Kayan	rei̤33
Dosanbu Kayan	rei̤31
Thamidai	ri55
Pekon Kayan	rē
Bwe	wɪ
Blimaw	ɣi̤33
Western Pwo Karen	ɣê [51]
Eastern Pwo Karen	ɣī̤ [33]
Sgaw Karen	ɣè [21]

These words (except Nangki) are related to each other, and a proto-form can be reconstructed.

  *reB (Solnit 2013)
  *reᴮ (Luangthongkum 2019)

coconut	
Northern Pa-O	mok34 ʔun31
Southern Pa-O	moʔ32 ʔon42
Eastern Kayah Li	---
Zayein	mak33 qa33 ʔoan42
Nangki	ʔou31
Yingtalay	ma53 ʔouŋ55
Thaidai	ma33 ʔon42
Sonkan Kayan	ʔouŋ31
Dosanbu Kayan	ʔouŋ55
Thamidai	ʔon42
Pekon Kayan	ʔōŋ
Bwe	u
Blimaw	ʔou55
Western Pwo Karen	phláu [55]
Eastern Pwo Karen	phlɔ̀ [11]
Sgaw Karen	xɔ̄ [33]

The Northern Pa-O, Southern Pa-O, Zayein, Yingtalay, and Thaidai forms are borrowings from Shan.
Cf. Shan *maak² ʔun¹* (Transcription follows Hudak 2000)

The Nangki, Sonkan, Dosanbu, Thamidai, Pekon Kayan, Bwe, and Blimaw forms are borrowings from Burmese or Shan. These borrowings are very new because the tones do not show a regular correspondence. (cf. Kato 2018) Cf. Burmese /ʔóuɴ/ အုန်း

The Western Pwo, Eastern Pwo, and Sgaw forms are borrowings from Mon.
Mon ြ <brau> /prɛ̀a/ (Shorto 1962)
These can be old borrowings because the tones show a regular correspondence.

We cannot reconstruct a protoform.

teak	
Northern Pa-O	mai22 sak34
Southern Pa-O	---
Eastern Kayah Li	lehʌ
Zayein	mai42 sak42
Nangki	---
Yingtalay	la55 hai55
Thaidai	cu42
Sonkan Kayan	kiao31
Dosanbu Kayan	kla55
Thamidai	cun55
Pekon Kayan	cú
Bwe	bahi
Blimaw	la11 hei55
Western Pwo Karen	pəjì [1.11]
Eastern Pwo Karen	pəjí [1.55]
Sgaw Karen	pəhî [1.51]

Some languages use Shan borrowings.

Cf. Shan *may⁵ shak⁴* (Hudak 2000)

Some languages use Burmese borrowings.

Cf. Burmese /cúɴ/ ကျွန်း

The origins of the other forms are unknown.

We cannot reconstruct a proto-form for 'teak'.

palmyra palm (toddy palm)	
Northern Pa-O	than34
Southern Pa-O	thæn42
Eastern Kayah Li	---
Zayein	---
Nangki	---
Yingtalay	---
Thaidai	than45
Sonkan Kayan	---
Dosanbu Kayan	thaŋ55
Thamidai	na42 thɛn42
Pekon Kayan	---
Bwe	thá
Blimaw	tho55
Western Pwo Karen	thàɴ [11]
Eastern Pwo Karen	tà [11]
Sgaw Karen	tá [55]

Many languages use Burmese borrowings.

Cf. Burmese /tháɴ/ ထန်း

Eastern Pwo Karen and Sgaw Karen use Mon borrowings.

Cf. Mon တၜ <tā> /ta/ (Shorto 1962)

These Mon borrowings can be old because Eastern Pwo and Sgaw show a regular tonal correspondence.

These words are all borrowings, and we cannot reconstruct a protoform for 'palmyra palm'.

banana	
Northern Pa-O	thaʔ34 thi34
Southern Pa-O	θa42 thi44
Eastern Kayah Li	dīklwí
Zayein	le42 ɲa̤42 le42
Nangki	---
Yingtalay	θa55 kloi53
Thaidai	cə33 kuai42
Sonkan Kayan	khlui31
Dosanbu Kayan	khlui42
Thamidai	cu42 kui55
Pekon Kayan	kʰlwí
Bwe	yà
Blimaw	la11 kwe11
Western Pwo Karen	θaʔklɯ́ [51.55]
Eastern Pwo Karen	θàkwì [11.11]
Sgaw Karen	təkwí [1.55]

Manson (2019) reconstructs *kʰlwiᴬ for Proto-Kayan.

Similar forms are found in several other languages. Probably, these are related to Proto-Mon-Khmer *t₁luuy[ ] (Shorto 2006). Thus, it is possible that Proto-Karen borrowed a word for 'banana' from some Mon-Khmer language, and a protoform such as *khlwi¹ can be reconstructed for it. However, this issue needs further consideration because these forms do not always show regular phonological correspondences.

The Bwe form *yà* is related to another etymon. (Next slide)

Gloss	Pa-O	Pk	KyE	Kyw	Bl	Pl	P	S	pK	other
banana	ŋàʔ	ŋá̧	ŋē	jɔ̰̄ sà	yà		jāʔ mỳ	jàʔ	ŋakD	#2526 *s-ŋak PLANTAIN/BANANA

From Solnit (2013)

Pk=Pekon Kayan; KyE=Eastern Kayah Li; Kyw=Kayaw;
Bl=Blimaw (Henderson's Bwe); Pl=Palaychi; P=Pwo Karen;
S=Sgaw Karen; pK=Proto-Karen

These words can evidently be traced back to Proto-Karen. Solnit (2013) reconstructs *ŋakD for Proto-Karen. Therefore, it is certain that a word for 'banana' existed in Proto-Karen, even if the form such as *khlwi^1 did not exist.

Manson glosses Proto-Kayan *kʰlwi^A as 'banana <u>fruit</u>', and *ŋa̧ʔ^D 'banana <u>plant</u>'.

sugar cane	
Northern Pa-O	toŋ34 lai31
Southern Pa-O	toŋ44 lai42
Eastern Kayah Li	dīklɛ bō
Zayein	qiŋ42 kwai55 bɔŋ55
Nangki	he31 kli232
Yingtalay	khi53
Thaidai	din42 khle42
Sonkan Kayan	khle31 boŋ31
Dosanbu Kayan	khlai42 boŋ42
Thamidai	cɛn55 khlæ55
Pekon Kayan	dèŋkʰláibú
Bwe	ɗăkhlɛ́
Blimaw	chi11 ɗou55
Western Pwo Karen	sɦìphoʔ [11.51]
Eastern Pwo Karen	cìphó [11.55]
Sgaw Karen	thípoʔ [55.11]

It is not possible to reconstruct a protoform of these words in Proto-Karen.

betel palm	
Northern Pa-O	mok34 mu53
Southern Pa-O	maʔ32 mu44
Eastern Kayah Li	---
Zayein	maŋ42 mṵ33
Nangki	mouʔ53
Yingtalay	ma53
Thaidai	kun42
Sonkan Kayan	ni31 mo̰u31
Dosanbu Kayan	mo̰u31
Thamidai	kwen55
Pekon Kayan	bamò
Bwe	màmú
Blimaw	la11 ma11
Western Pwo Karen	θeʔ [51]
Eastern Pwo Karen	θè [11]
Sgaw Karen	θɛ́ʔ [43]

Manson (2019) reconstructs
*bəmo̰^{A} for Proto-Kayan.

Peiros (1989) reconstructs
*mɔ́^{B} for Proto-Karen.
However, it is uncertain
whether a Proto-Karen
form can be reconstructed.

mango	
Northern Pa-O	ta31 khoʔ34
Southern Pa-O	θa42 khoʔ32
Eastern Kayah Li	təkhɛ́
Zayein	θa33 khwa42
Nangki	khu31
Yingtalay	ta33 khɔ53
Thaidai	kho45
Sonkan Kayan	khɔ53
Dosanbu Kayan	khaoʔ53
Thamidai	khaoʔ
Pekon Kayan	kʰàu
Bwe	---
Blimaw	la11 hu11
Western Pwo Karen	khoʔ [51]
Eastern Pwo Karen	khò [11]
Sgaw Karen	təkhóʔ [1.43]

All the words we have here can be traced back to Proto-Karen.

Solnit (2013) reconstructs ***khok** for Proto-Karen.

Luangthonkum (2019) reconstructs ***khɔʔ[D]** for Proto-Karen.

tamarind	
Northern Pa-O	mok34 kreŋ34
Southern Pa-O	moŋ42 kreŋ44
Eastern Kayah Li	---
Zayein	mə33 ʁe̤a̤ŋ42
Nangki	ʔa232 klai53
Yingtalay	mi55 piaŋ53
Thaidai	bun42 klein33
Sonkan Kayan	ma31 klaiŋ53
Dosanbu Kayan	ŋkla̤i̤ŋ31
Thamidai	ma42 klen55
Pekon Kayan	---
Bwe	màklé
Blimaw	mṵ11 kle55
Western Pwo Karen	mánɴkhláuɴ [55.55]
Eastern Pwo Karen	mànɴkhlōɴ [11.33]
Sgaw Karen	màklɔ̀ [21.21], mɔ̀klē [33.33]

It is highly possible that all the words listed here can be traced back to Proto-Karen.

Manson (2019) reconstructs *makʰlɛŋᴮʂaᴮ for Proto-Karen.

Two points must be kept in mind here:

- The tones do not exhibit a perfect correspondence.
- Sgaw Karen has two forms for 'tamarind'.

There might have been two or more allophams of a single etymon denoting 'tamarind' in Proto-Karen.

Cf. Mon မင်ဂၠိန် <man glon>
/mὲaŋ klòn/

jackfruit	
Northern Pa-O	mok34 klaŋ22
Southern Pa-O	maʔ32 klaŋ53
Eastern Kayah Li	---
Zayein	la̰ŋ42
Nangki	ʔa232 laŋʔ53
Yingtalay	---
Thaidai	di42 ne33
Sonkan Kayan	ba31 laŋ31
Dosanbu Kayan	ba42 la̰ŋ31
Thamidai	pe55 nen55
Pekon Kayan	balāŋ
Bwe	tɔbəne, thɔbənɪ
Blimaw	tɔ11 ɲi̤11
Western Pwo Karen	nwê [51]
Eastern Pwo Karen	nwɛ̄ [33]
Sgaw Karen	pənwɛ̀ [1.21]

Manson (2019) reconstructs *bəl̥aɴ[B] for Proto-Kayan.

However, for the Proto-Karen stage, it seems to difficult to reconstruct a protoform.

Summary for Karenic plant names

For the words meaning 'bamboo', 'banyan', 'rattan', 'banana', 'mango', and 'tamarind', protoforms can be reconstructed in Proto-Karen. For the other plant names treated in this study, it is difficult to reconstruct Proto-Karen forms. This is especially true for the words meaning 'coconut' and 'palmyra palm'; they are all loanwords. Therefore, we can assume that the bamboo, banyan, rattan, banana, mango, and tamarind existed in the area where Proto-Karen was spoken, but that the coconut and palmyra palm did not.

The coconut and palmyra palm are typical tropical plants. They do not grow well in the subtropics. The bamboo, banyan, rattan, banana, mango, and tamarind can grow in the subtropics. Therefore, the area where the Proto-Karen was spoken was subtropical, not tropical.

Next, we will see where the largest number of Karenic languages are spoken.
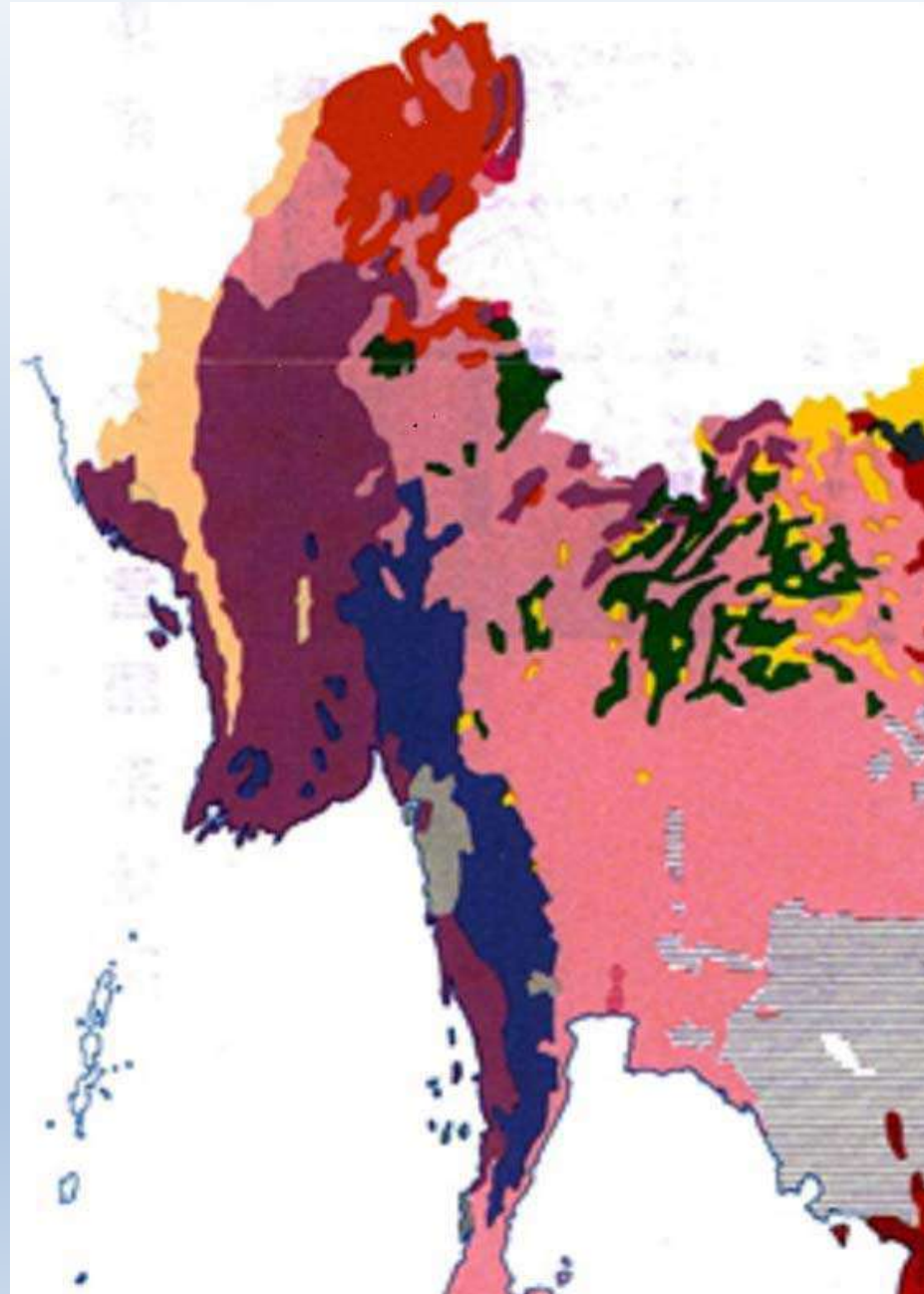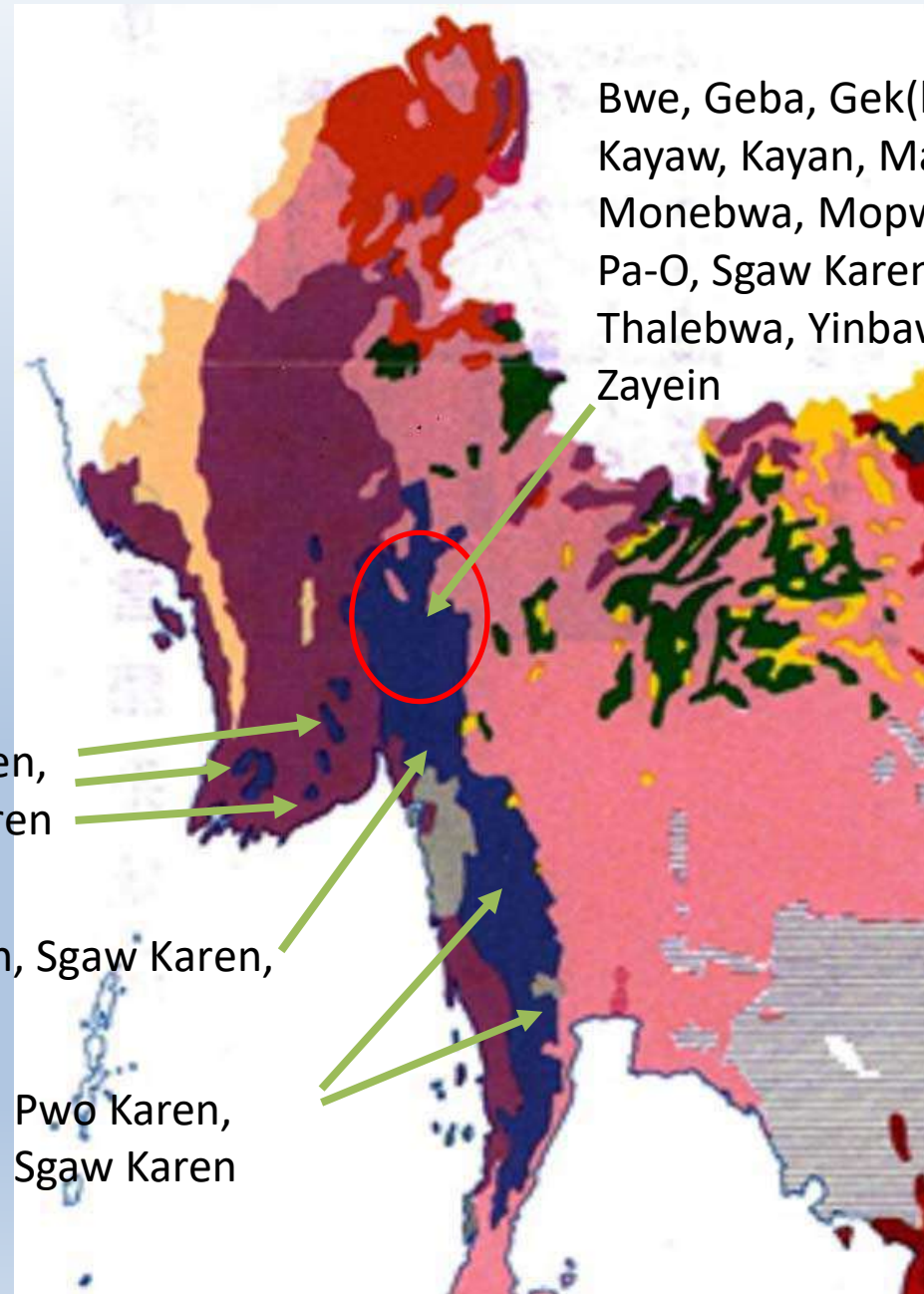
Bwe, Geba, Gek(h)o, Kayah, Kayaw, Kayan, Manu, Monebwa, Mopwa, Paku, Pa-O, Sgaw Karen, Thalebwa, Yinbaw, Yintale, Zayein

Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen

Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen, Pa-O

Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen

Bwe, Geba, Gek(h)o, Kayah, Kayaw, Kayan, Manu, Monebwa, Mopwa, Paku, Pa-O, Sgaw Karen, Thalebwa, Yinbaw, Yintale, Zayein

Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen

Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen, Pa-O

Pwo Karen, Sgaw Karen
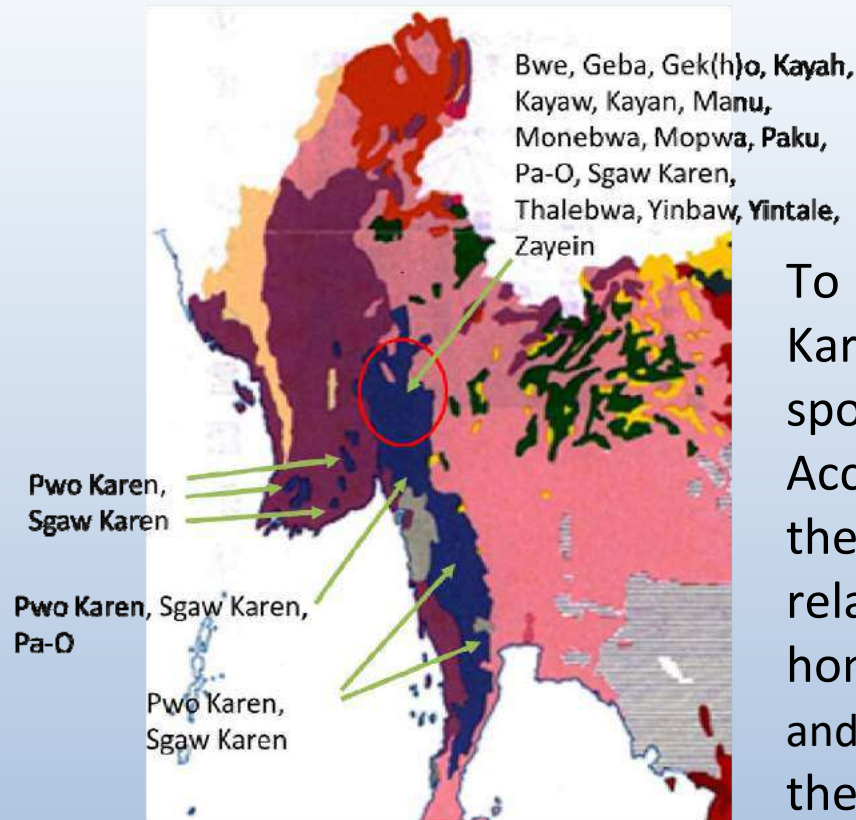
To put it plainly, in the circled area, all Karenic languages except Pwo Karen are spoken (cf. Moseley and Asher 1994). According to linguistic migration theory, the area where the largest number of related languages are spoken is the homeland of the languages (see Campbell and Mixco 2007, for example). Therefore, the homeland of the Karenic languages can be located in the circled area.

This circled area also has a subtropical part. The following map shows the Köppen-Geiger climate zones in Myanmar.

Cited from:
Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU)
http://www.themimu.info/

Cited from:
Myanmar Information
Management Unit (MIMU)
http://www.themimu.info/
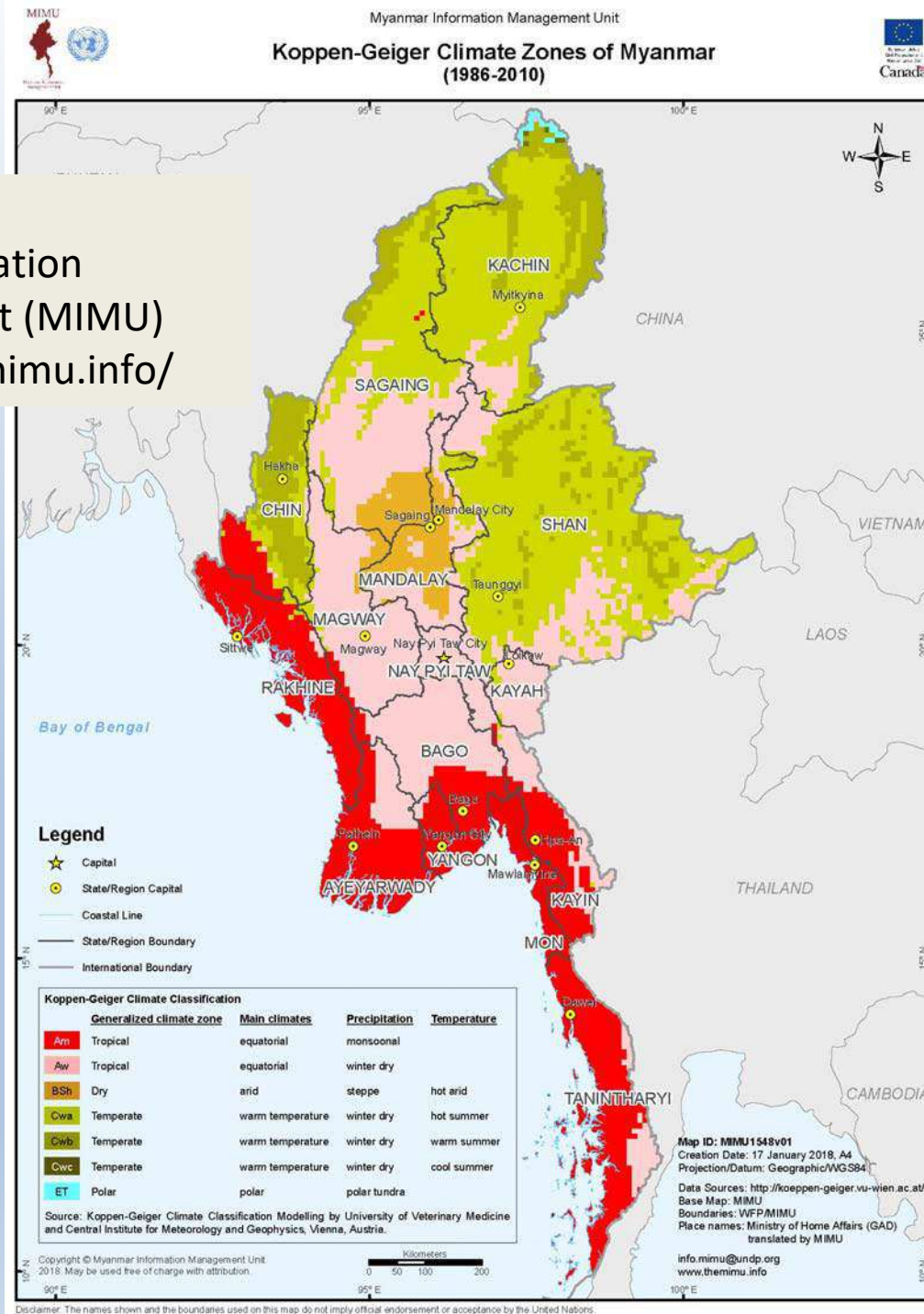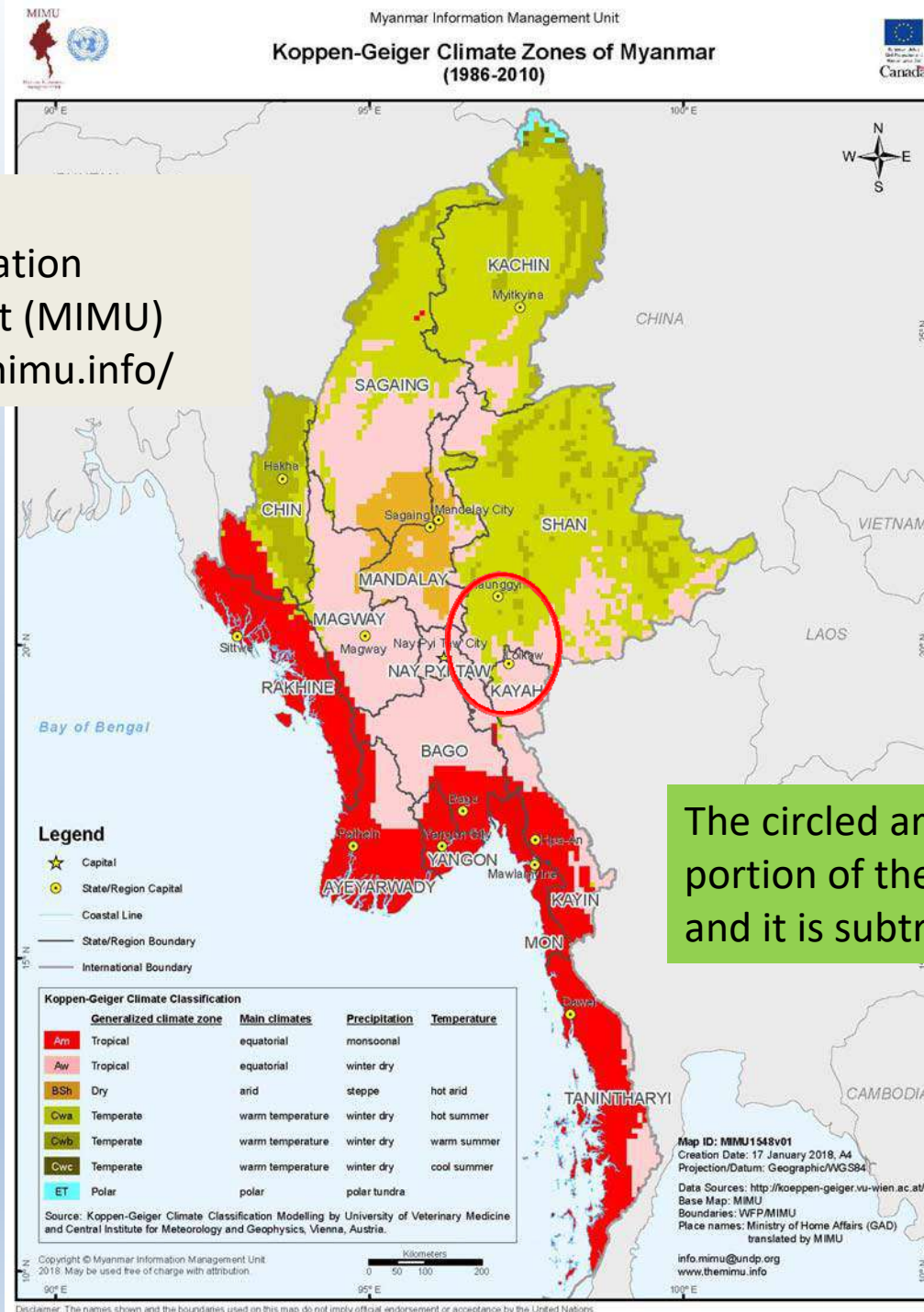
The circled area has a large portion of the Cwa climate, and it is subtropical.
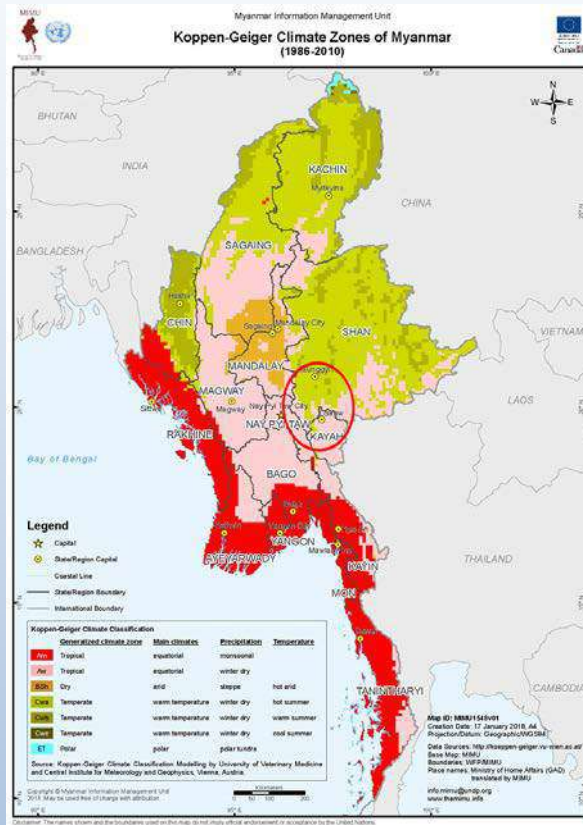
The important points are:

- The circled area shows the highest diversity of Karenic languages.
- The circled area has a large subtropical part.

Therefore, the last homeland of Karenic languages is likely to have been located in the circled area.

Today, many
Pwo Karens and
Sgaw Karens live
in the tropics.
The climates of
their villages are
very tropical.

A Pwo Karen village in the Ayeyarwady Delta
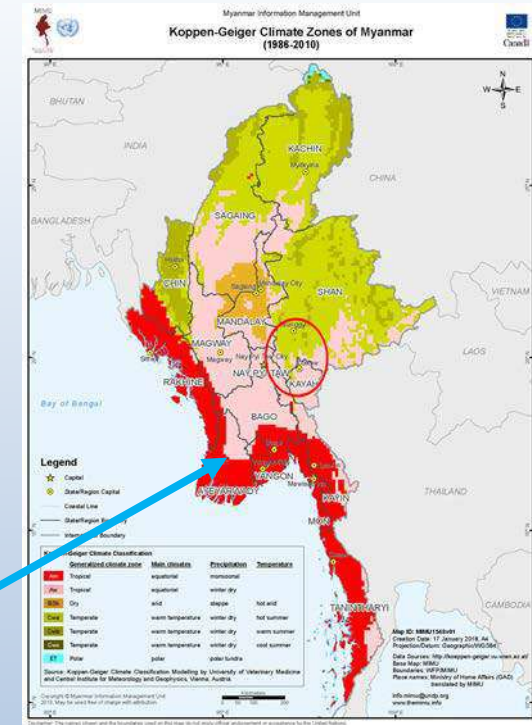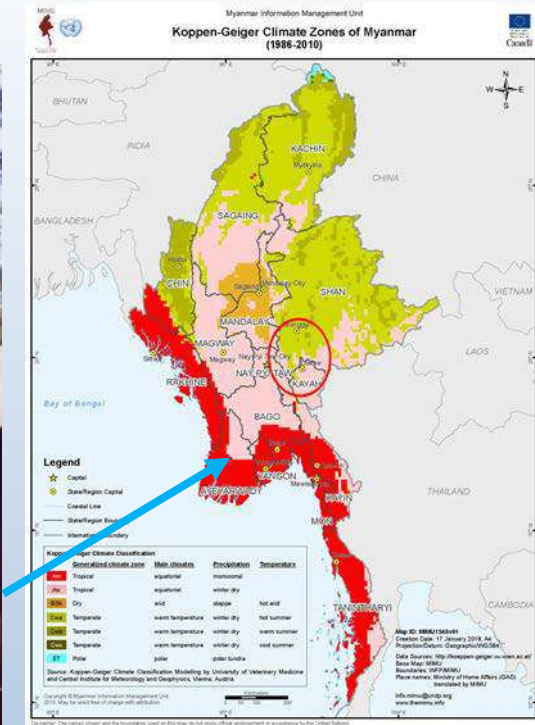
A Pwo Karen village in the Ayeyarwady Delta

A Pwo Karen village in the Ayeyarwady Delta

A Pwo Karen village in the Ayeyarwady Delta

Ayeyarwady Delta

61
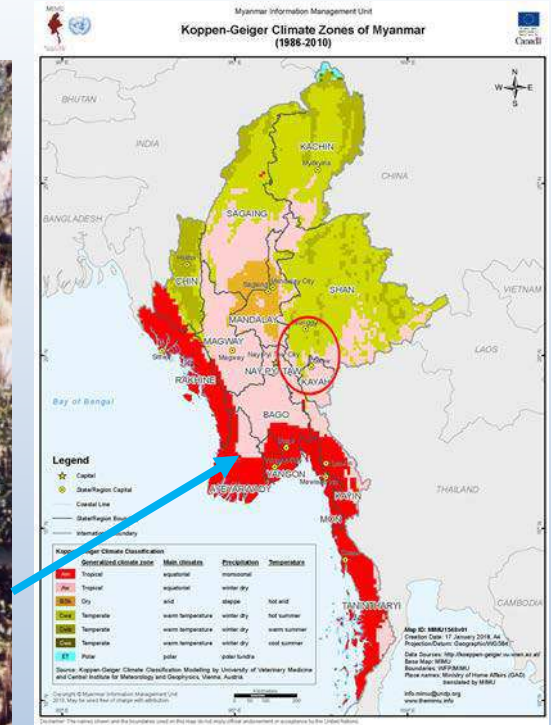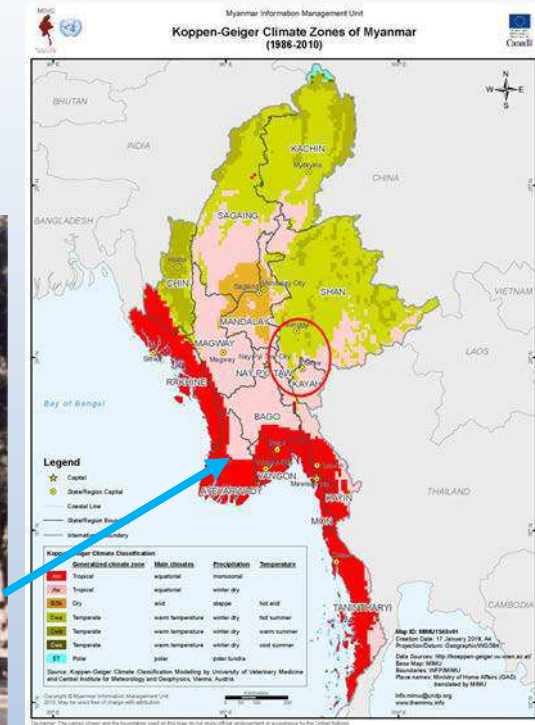
Hpa-an, the capital of Karen State
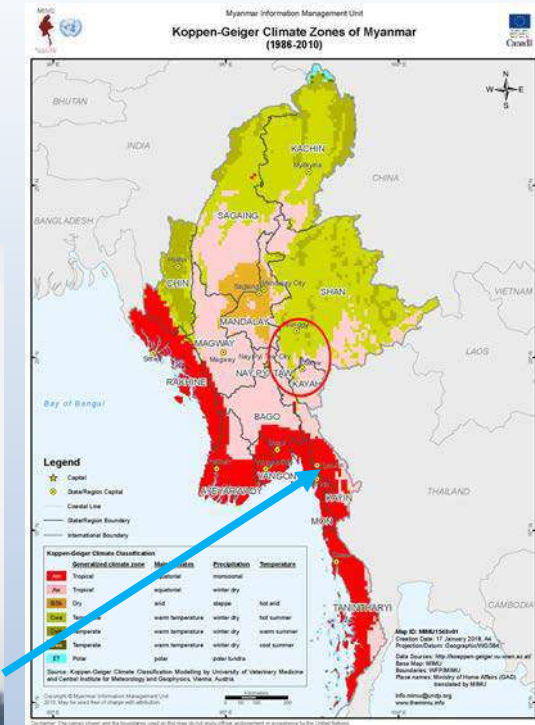
A Pwo Karen village near Hpa-an
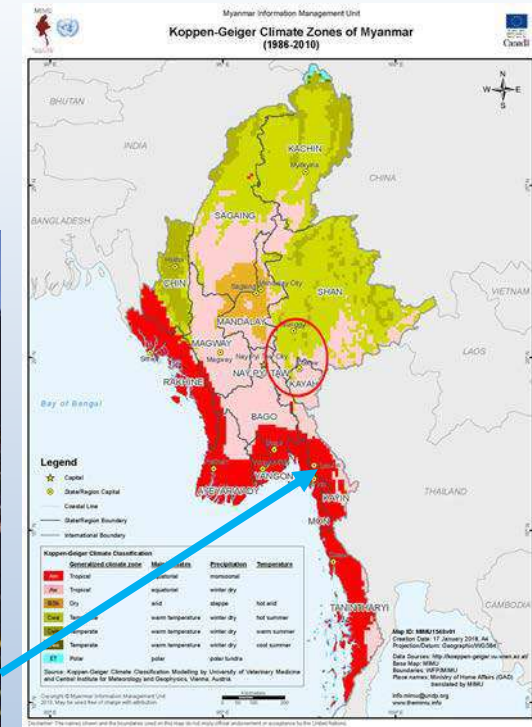
A Buddhist temple near Hpa-an
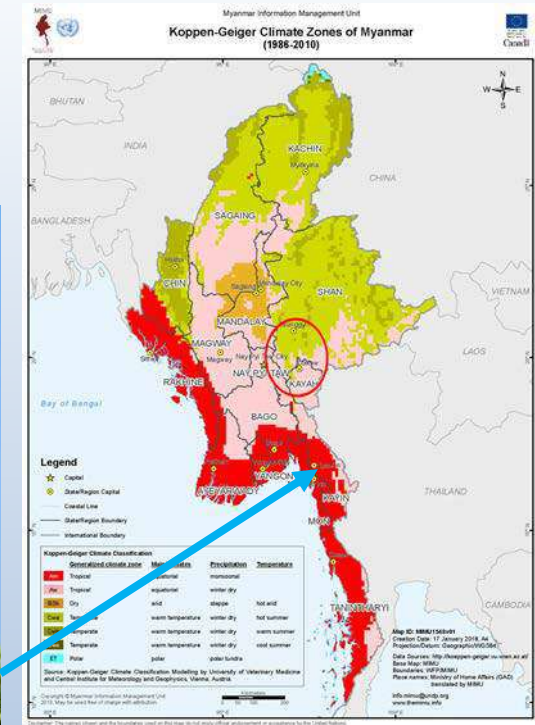
A Buddhist temple near Hpa-an
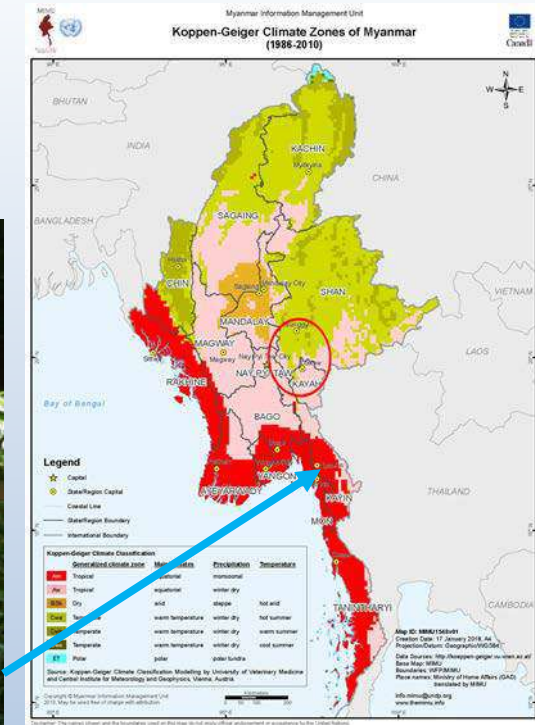
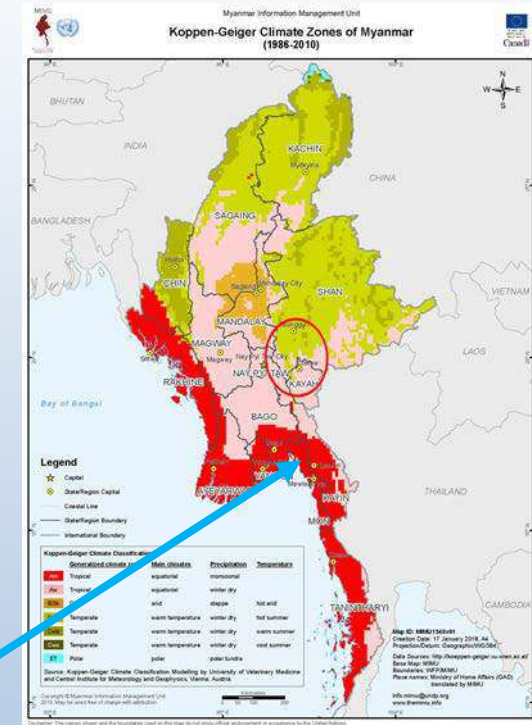A Pwo Karen village near Hpa-an
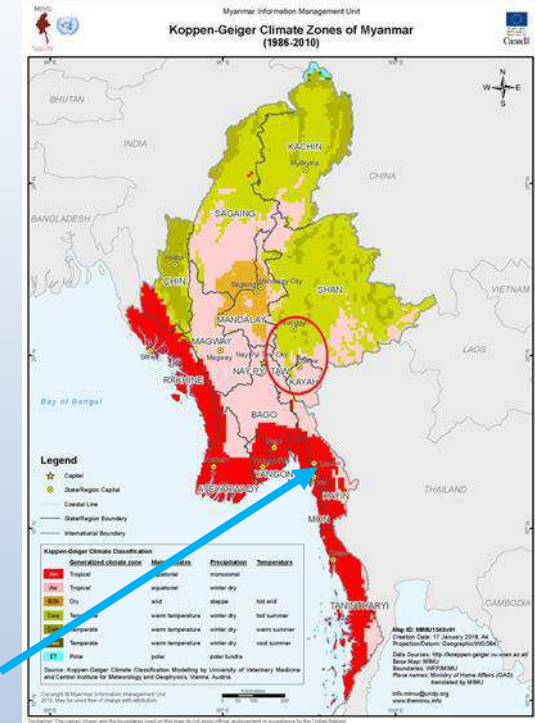
A Pwo Karen village near Hpa-an
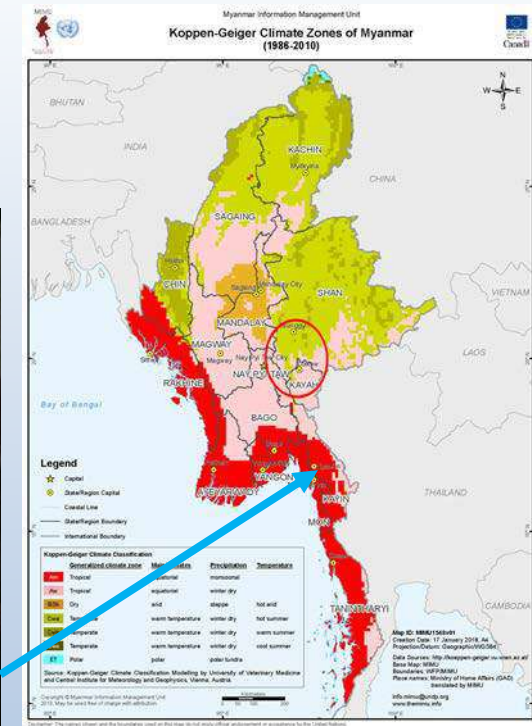
A forest near Hpa-an

A Pwo Karen village near Hpa-an
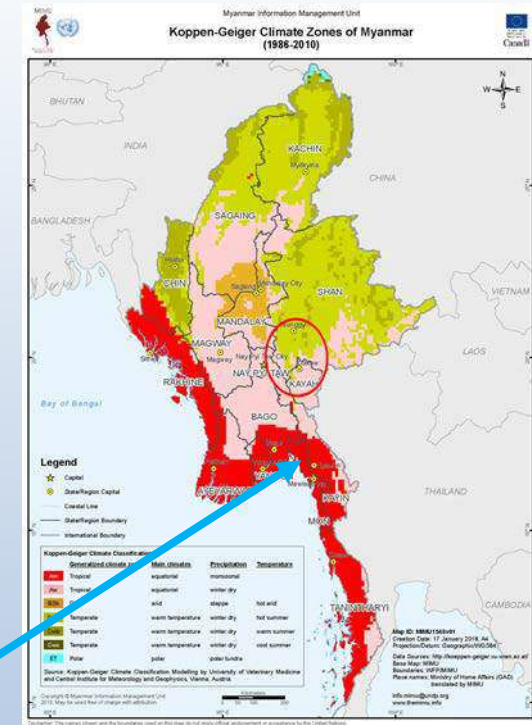
A Pwo Karen village near Hpa-an

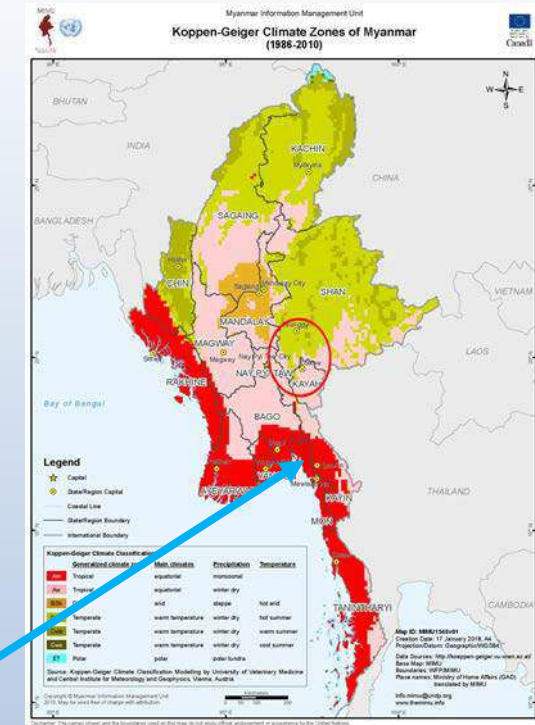A Pwo Karen village near Hpa-an
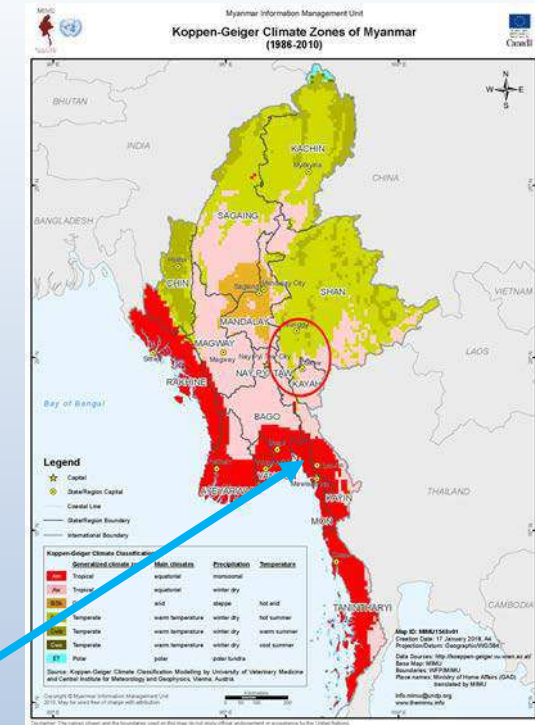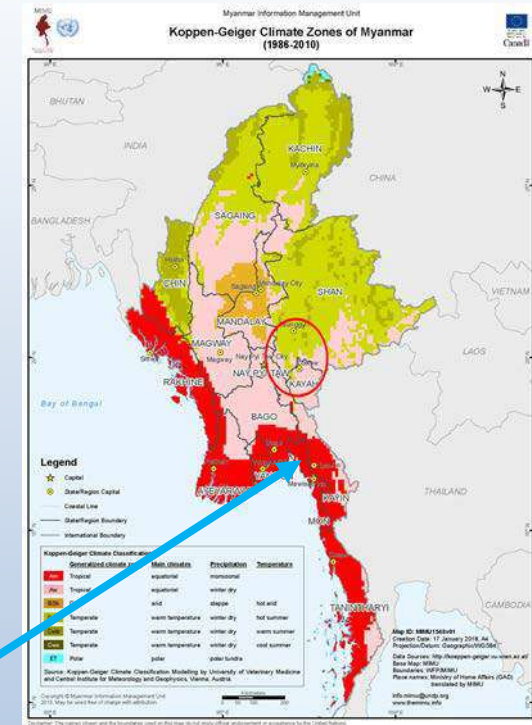
A Pwo Karen village near Hpa-an

A Pwo Karen village in Mon State

A Pwo Karen village in Mon State
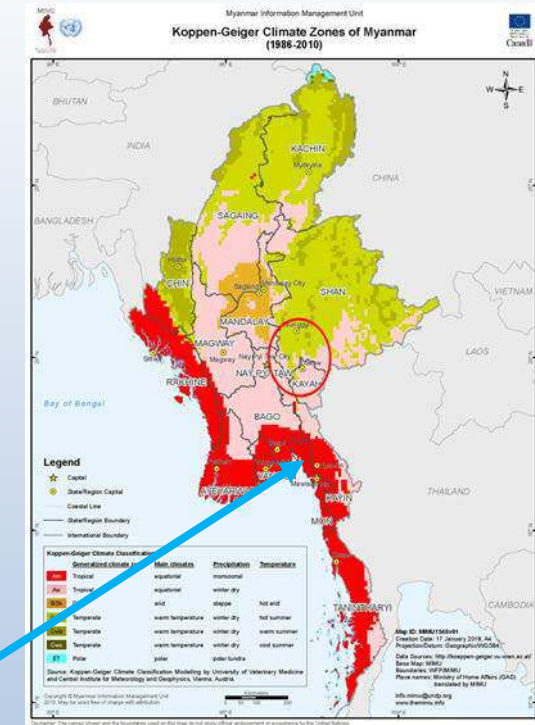
A Pwo Karen village in Mon State

A Pwo Karen village in Mon State

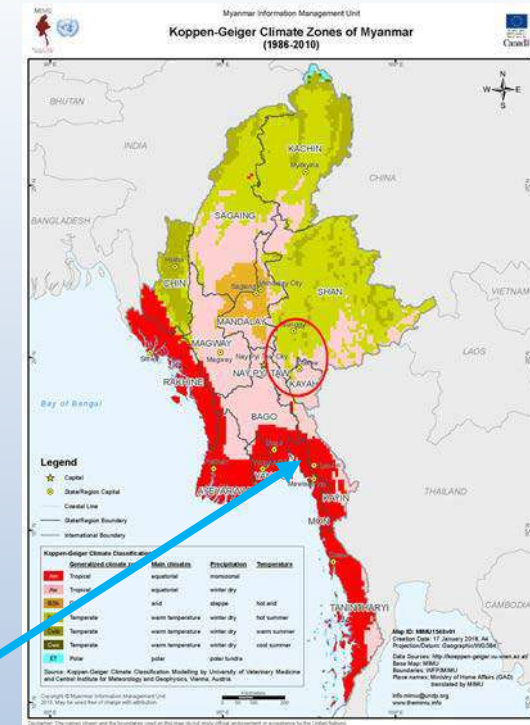A Pwo Karen village in Mon State

A Pwo Karen village in Mon State

A Pwo Karen village in Mon State

A Pwo Karen village in Mon State

The climate of the circled area is subtropical.

A view in Southern Shan State

A Pa-O village in Southern Shan State

A Pa-O village in Southern Shan State

A Pa-O village in Southern Shan State

A Pa-O village in Southern Shan State

A Pa-O village in Southern Shan State

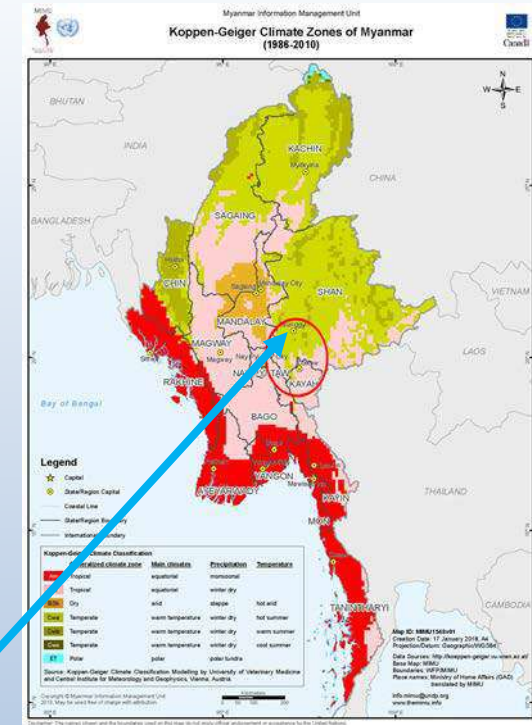A Pa-O village in Southern Shan State

A Pa-O village in Southern Shan State

The climate of Northern Karen State
is subtropical.

Thandaungyi Town in Northern Karen State

From Wikipedia:Thandaunggyi Township
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thandaunggyi_Township
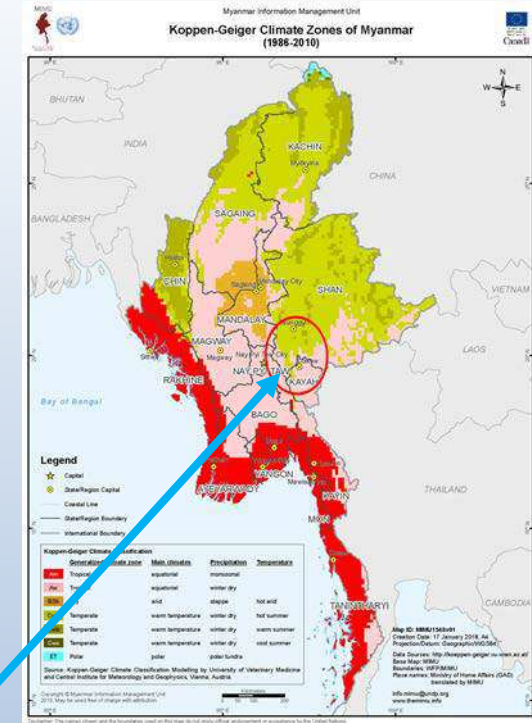
Thandaungyi is situated on one of the tops of these mountains. These are subranges of the Shan Hills.

A view of the Karen Hills from Taunggoo

Myanmar Information Management Unit
Koppen-Geiger Climate Zones of Myanmar
(1986-2010)

Conclusion

- The last homeland of Karenic languages is likely to have been located in the circled area, i.e., the area around the borders of Shan State, Kayah State, and Karen State, because this area shows the highest diversity of Karenic languages and has a large subtropical part.

In addition, let us consider what route the speakers of Proto-Karen took to reach this homeland. Considering the availability of water, it is highly likely that they came down along the Thanlween (Salween) River. The route is shown in the map on the next page.

Possible route of migration by the ancestors of Karenic peoples

Myanmar Information Management Unit

Koppen-Geiger Climate Zones of Myanmar
(1986-2010)
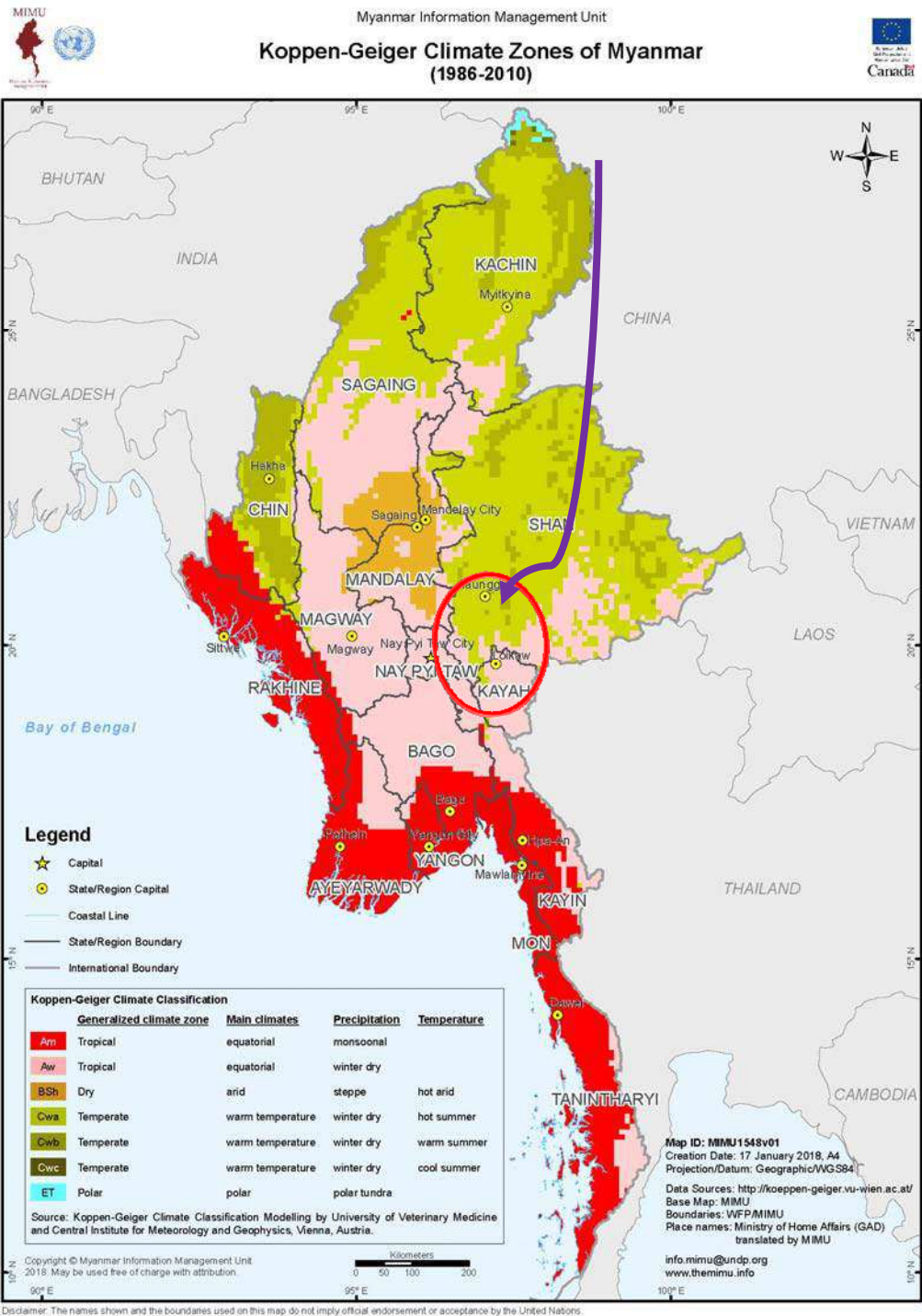
References

Campbell, Lyle & Mauricio J. Mixco. 2007. linguistic homeland. *A Glossary of Historical Linguistics*, pp. 106–108. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2019. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world. Twenty-second edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International.

Hudak, Thomas John. 2000. *Cushing's Shan-English Dictionary: A Phonetic Version*. Tempe: Arizona State University.

Kato, Atsuhiko. 2018. How did Haudricourt reconstruct Proto-Karen tones? *Reports of the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies* 49, pp. 21–44

____. 2021. Typological profile of Karenic languages. (In) Sidwell, Paul and Mathias Jenny (eds.) *The Languages and Linguistics of Mainland Southeast Asia*, pp. 337–367. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Luangthongkum, Theraphan. 2013. A view on Proto-Karen phonology and lexicon. (unpublished ms. contributed to STEDT).

____. 2019. A view on Proto-Karen phonology and lexicon. *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society* 12 (1): i–lii.

Manson, Ken. 2002. *Karenic Language Relationships: A Lexical and Phonological Analysis*. Chiang Mai: Department of Linguistics, Payap University.

____. 2010. *A grammar of Kayan, a Tibeto-Burman language*. Ph.D. dissertation at La Trobe University.

____. 2017. The characteristics of the Karen branch of Tibeto-Burman. (In) Picus Sizhi Ding & Jamin Pelkey (eds.) *Sociohistorical Linguistics in Southeast Asia: New Horizons for Tibeto-Burman Studies in Honor of David Bradley*, pp. 149–168. Leiden/Boston: Brill.

____. 2019. Proto–Kayan. ms.

Matisoff, James A. 2003. *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman: System and philosophy of Sino-Tibetan reconstruction*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

____. 2015. *The Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus*. Berkeley: The Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus Project.

Mitani, Yasuyuki [三谷恭之]. 1984. 東南アジアの言語分布. 大林太良編『民族の世界史6: 東南アジアの民族と歴史』東京: 山川出版社.

Moseley, Christopher & Asher R. E. (eds.). 1994. *Atlas of the World's Languages*. London & New York: Routledge.

Peiros, Ilia. 1989. Some enhancements for the reconstruction of Proto-Karen. Historical Accentology and the
    Comparative Method. Moscow: Nauka: 225–254.

Shintani, Tadahiko L. A. [新谷忠彦]. 2014. *The Zayein Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No.
    102. Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2015. *The Kadaw Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 106. Tokyo: Research Institute
    for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2017. *The Blimaw Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 112. Tokyo: Research
    Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2018a. *The Yingtalay Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 115. Tokyo: Research
    Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2018b. *The Thaidai Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 116. Tokyo: Research
    Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2018c. *The Sonkan Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 118. Tokyo: Research
    Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2018d. *The Dosanbu Kayan Langu*age. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 120. Tokyo:
    Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2020a. *The Thamidai Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 126. Tokyo: Research
    Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

____. 2020b. *The Pao Language*. Linguistic Survey of Tay Cultural Area (LSTCA) No. 131. Tokyo: Research Institute
    for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa.

Shorto, H. L. 1962. *A Dictionary of Modern Spoken Mon*. London: Oxford University Press.

____. 2006. *A Mon-Khmer Comparative Dictionary*. (Main editor: Paul Sidwell; Assisting editors: Doug Cooper and
    Christian Bauer) Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

Solnit, David B. 1997. *Eastern Kayah Li: Grammar, texts, glossary*. Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press.

____. 2013. Proto-Karen Rhymes. Paper read at the 46th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and
    Linguistics, Dartmouth University.

U Min Nain (ဦးမင်းနိုင်). 1960. တို့တိုင်းရင်းဖွား ပြည်ထောင်စုသား. Yangon: Ministry of Culture. [in Burmese]

အိၣ်ဆ�ိၣ်င်းလၢ၀ဆၢ်။