

Lolo-Burmese Rhymes

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Although numerous different rhymes can be found in Written Burmese, it is not clear that all of these can be reconstructed at the Lolo-Burmese level. Below evidence is given for the reconstruction of a specific set of rhymes with the core of the evidence coming from Written Burmese, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, Sani, and Nasu data, but a broader range of data is examined with respect to specific problems.

A large number of writers have tentatively reconstructed Lolo-Burmese rhymes,<sup>1</sup> but the rhymes have never been the specific focus of a study. This study provides that focus while it gives evidence for the reconstruction of a given set of rhymes. Open rhymes, nasal rhymes, and stopped rhymes will each be discussed in turn.

Frequently each rhyme has multiple reflexes in each of the related languages which depend upon the nature of the root initial consonant or consonant cluster, and even on the tone. Because of the large number of rhymes, only those rhymes which are controversial in some sense are supported in this paper with extensive evidence. When dealing with a rhyme like \*-a where all previous investigators have set it up and where there is over a hundred excellent examples found in the literature, I see no reason to either comment or offer further evidence. Sufficient evidence can be readily found in a work such as Schafer's Introduction to Sino-Tibetan. In short, this study is a commentary on rhymes which does not replicate evidence found elsewhere.

The open rhymes. The following rhymes are reconstructable at the Lolo-Burmese level:

*-i	*-əy	*-u
	*-ö	*-o
	*-ay	*-ul
	*-a	

Sufficient comparative evidence exists to reconstruct all of the above rhymes with confidence.

1. The \*-ö rhyme. The Written Burmese representation of this rhyme presents at least a minor problem of interpretation, but it appears as though an i were written over a u:

o ┌ └		i ┌ └ u
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Wolfenden (1929) originally suggested on the basis of certain comparisons with modern Tibetan dialects that this diagraph symbolized a front rounded vowel, and the comparative evidence within Lolo-Burmese supports his early contention. Ahi, Akha, and Lisu all provide evidence for \*- $\bar{o}$ .

Corresponding to Written Burmese -ui, Akha and Ahi invariably have an - $\bar{o}$  in certain modern dialects. Little variation exists in the correspondences between Written Burmese, Ahi, and Akha; with only a small number of exceptions, an -ui in Written Burmese corresponds to an - $\bar{o}$  in Akha and Ahi. In fact, the \*- $\bar{o}$  rhyme is the sole source of the - $\bar{o}$  reflex in Akha.

In Lisu, which in contrast to Ahi and Akha does not have a modern front unrounded vowel, an incredible number of different reflexes exist written in a number of different transcriptions: -i, -ĩ, - $\bar{u}$ , -o, -u, -ĩ, - $\bar{u}$ , etc. Partial order exists among these reflexes; after modern Lisu bilabial or palatal root initial consonants an unrounded high vowel is found, while after a modern Lisu dental or velar root initial consonant a rounded back vowel occurs. The range and nature of the Lisu reflexes of \*- $\bar{o}$  indicate both a rounded and a front vowel component to the proto-rhyme. Since Lisu lacks a modern rounded front vowel, the language reacted in some instances by eliminating the rounding component and in other instances by eliminating the front component.

The final piece of evidence suggesting that this rhyme should be reconstructed as \*- $\bar{o}$  instead of \*- $\bar{aw}$  or \*- $\bar{uw}$  is, of course, the representation in Written Burmese. Writing - $\bar{o}$  as an i over a u seems like a quite reasonable way to represent a vowel with both a rounded and a front component.

2. The \*-ay rhyme. The correspondence is best represented by the set: Written Burmese -ai, Sani - $\bar{æ}$ . While this is not a heavily attested rhyme, it has clear and distinctive reflexes.<sup>2</sup>

3. The \*-u and \*-o rhymes. There is some question about whether we are dealing with one or two rhymes here. Schafer (1966-7) suggests \*-o and -au (for Loloish), while Matisoff (1967) suggests \*-u and \*-aw,<sup>3</sup> but even if both are set up at the proto-stage it is clear that they were at least in partial complementary distribution.

4. The \*-ul rhyme. Nowhere in Lolo-Burmese is the final -l explicitly retained. Rhymes which extra-Lolo-Burmese evidence establishes as having had an -l final do, however, occur in Nasu in a 32 stopped tone. The unique tone and

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The stopped rhymes. The following stopped rhymes can be reconstructed at the Lolo-Burmese level:

*-ik	*-it	*-i.t	*-uk	*-ut	(*-u.k)
	*-ip			*-up	
			*-ok	*-ök	
		*-ak	*-at		
		*-ap			

Most of the work is based heavily in this section on correspondences originally noted in Matisoff (1972), The Loloish Tonal Split Revisited. What follows below is largely a number of small changes.

1. The \*-it and the \*-i.t rhymes. I have reconstructed the following correspondence as length differences because of the correspondence between Written Burmese rit 'reap' and Lushai riit 'reap' following the suggestion of both Benedict (1972) and Matisoff (1972), but there is no claim that the difference was manifested as length at the Lolo-Burmese stage.

<u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	<u>Written Burmese</u>	<u>Akha</u>
*-it	-ac	-eh
*-i.t	-it	-i, -ui, -eu

(The reconstructed length difference has a parallel in the nasal rhymes where TB \*-in goes to WB -aŋ while TB \*-i.n goes to WB -in, but as indicated in the discussion of \*-i.n above, clear sets for the reconstruction of \*-i.n have not been found).

2. The \*-u.k rhyme. Like the \*-u.ŋ rhyme discussed above, I have not found any solid cognates for this rhyme. A number of forms almost work, but at the present this rhyme cannot be reconstructed at the Lolo-Burmese level.

It is quite clear, however, that neither the \*-u.ŋ nor the \*-u.k rhymes can be completely dismissed. Benedict (1972) presents some extra-Loloish comparisons with Lushai which suggest vowel length considerations:

<u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	<u>Written Burmese</u>	<u>Lushai</u>	
*tšuk	tsauk <sup>I</sup>	tšhuk	'steep (353)'
*s-nuŋ	hnâuŋ	hnuŋ	'the back (354)'
*m-yuŋ	lak-khyâuŋ	zuŋ	'finger (355)'
but,			

<u>Tibeto-Burman</u>	<u>Written Burmese</u>	<u>Lushai</u>	
*tu.k	thuik-thuik	thu.k	'thick (356)'
*mu.k	muik	mu.k	'dull; dark (357)'
*bu.k	wâm-puik	pu.k	'cave; belly (358)'
*ku.ŋ	khuin	ku.ŋ	'branch (359)'

Something is occurring, but it is not clear what. The Lolo-Burmese evidence for establishing these rhymes has not been found yet.

3. The \*-ök rhyme. This rhyme differs from the \*-ok rhyme primarily in its Akha reflex. Interestingly, however, Lolo-Burmese \*?tök 'cut by a blow' has a Lushai cognate työk 'break open' (<TB \*s-tök) which suggests that further evidence for this rhyme as differentiated from \*-ok will be found in Lolo-Burmese.

Conclusion. The above rhymes have been established on the basis of relatively strict rules for the correspondences between Written Burmese, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, Sani (Nyi), and Nasu. It should be noted that, while by and large the sets are dependable, a number of the sets in Schafer (1966-7) do not follow strict correspondences. The evidence for the controversial rhymes is presented below.

#### Footnotes:

1. Burling (1967), Matisoff (1968, 1972), Schafer (1966-7), Benedict (1972), and Thurgood (forthcoming, 1975) have all discussed rhymes in their respective works.
2. Schafer has both a -ai and a -ay, but this is based solely on Written Burmese considerations and does not seem justified on the Lolo-Burmese level. Note that the WB word tshai 'ten' has irregular reflexes throughout Loloish.
3. Burling has both -o and -u, but his -o is equivalent to my \*-ö.
4. This is not Burling's \*-un rhyme which is equivalent to \*-wan. Matisoff (1968) does suggest a \*-un rhyme.

## \*-ay

	Written Burmese	Lahu	Lisu	Akha	Sani	Nasu	
*tsay <sup>1</sup>	tac-tshai	chi	tshi	tse <sup>ˇ</sup>	ts'ɣ 33	ts'a 21	'ten'
*way <sup>1</sup>	wai	vɛ̃	wu	zeu <sup>ˇ</sup>	væ 33	vɔ 213	'buy'
*?lay <sup>2</sup>	hlâi	.	lɛ̃		hlæ 55	hlɔ 55	'change'
*lway <sup>1</sup>	lwai				læ 33		'easy'
*gray <sup>1</sup>	krai	kə <sup>T</sup>	ku- <sup>IT</sup>	gui <sup>ˇ</sup>	tʂæ 33		'star'
*pway <sup>2</sup>	phwâi	-phɛ̃	-phə̃	pui <sup>ˇ</sup>		pɣ 55	'chaff'
*?ə-way <sup>2</sup>	lak-wâi		ʎɛ̃		væ 55		'left (hand)'
*dzway <sup>1</sup>	a-tswai	cɪ	-chi <sup>I</sup>		tʂɔ 33	dɔ 21	'tusk'
*ray <sup>2</sup>	râi		nɪ-wu				'bold'
*kway <sup>2</sup>	khwâi		khə̃			k'ɛ̃ 21	'split'

## \*-aw

	Written Burmese	Lahu	Lisu	Akha	Sani	Nasu	
*kwaw <sup>1</sup>	kho	qho	khu	ku <sup>ˇ</sup>		k'u 33	'call'
*graw <sup>1</sup>	kro			gu <sup>ˇ</sup>		dzu 33	'call'
*baw <sup>1</sup>	po	pò	bu-jɛ				'float'
*baw <sup>3</sup>	po'	.		bu			'float'
*graw <sup>2</sup>	krô	-ku- <sup>T</sup>	-jũ	gu <sup>ˇ</sup>			'nerve; sinew'
*baw <sup>2</sup>	pô		bũ-lu			bu 33	'many'
*law <sup>2</sup>	lô		là				'float'

This set and the following set for \*-u are strictly speaking in complementary distribution. The velars, bilabials, and one l- initial in the first tone are here while another set of initials is found with \*-u. But until more sets are examined it is safer to continue to reconstruct both rhymes; if it is not necessary to reconstruct both \*-u and \*-aw later it is easy enough to combine them.

	Written Burmese	Lahu	Lisu	Akha	Sani	Nasu	
*-u							
*plu <sup>1</sup>	phru	phu	phu	pyu <sup>v</sup>	hli 33	t'u 24	'white; silver'
*u <sup>3</sup>	u'	u	fu			fw 32s	'egg'
*su <sup>1</sup>	su	šu	su	su <sup>v</sup>		su 33	'person'
*cu <sup>2</sup>	tshū	chū	chū				'thorn'
*tu <sup>1</sup>	thu	thu	tha	tu <sup>v</sup>	t'y 33	t'u 33	'thick'
*tsu <sup>1</sup>	tshu	chu		tsu <sup>v</sup>		ts'u 33	'be fat'
*?tu <sup>1</sup>	thu	tu	tū	tu <sup>v</sup>			'stand'
*u <sup>1</sup>	u		wu	u <sup>vT</sup>	y 33	wu 21	'bowels'
*N-du <sup>2</sup>	tū	dū	dū	du <sup>v</sup>	d'y 11		'dig'
*yu <sup>1</sup>	yu	yū	ra	yu <sup>v</sup>			'seize; take'
*?ə-rū <sup>2</sup>	a-rū		wū	u <sup>v</sup>			'crazy'
*ru <sup>2</sup>		ʔa					
*?bru <sup>1</sup>	phru		pu	pu <sup>v</sup>			'porcupine'
*bru <sup>1</sup>		pū					
*nu <sup>2</sup>	nū	nū	nū				'soft; tender'
*?nu <sup>2</sup>					no 55	nun 44	
*lu <sup>1</sup>	(lu)? 'flutter'		lu	lu <sup>T</sup>		lu 33	'butterfly'

Note that all Lisu forms are cited in a standardized notation found in Thurgood (forthcoming, 1975) since the various orthographies and transcriptions often make it difficult to compare forms.

	Written Burmese	Lahu	Lisu	Akha	Sani	Nasu	
*-u							
*p-							
*m-rul <sup>1</sup>	mrwe	hā-vī	xu/fwu			bu 32s	'snake'
*j-							
*r-mul <sup>1</sup>	mwē <sup>T</sup>	mu	mǃ		nu 44	*mrul	'body hair'
*r-kul <sup>2</sup>	krwē	kī	cǃ	ku <sup>v</sup>	tšæ 55		'sweat'
krul <sup>2</sup>							
*ŋul <sup>2</sup>	ŋwē			ngeu <sup>v</sup>			'silver; money'

## \*-it

	Written Burmese	Lahu	Lisu	Akha	Sani	Nasu	
*C-kit		qhè?		k'eh.			'break off a piece'
*b(y)it		cha-pè?	tú-bì	beh.			'vulva'
*krit	khrac					tš'i 32s	'scratch; scrape'
*N-krit	kyac	gê?		jeh <sup>I</sup>			'scrape'
*?rit	hrac	hí	hì	yeh.	he 22s	xen 34	'eight'
*?nyit	hñac	ní	nyí	nyeh.			'squeeze; press'
*s-nyit					ñe 44		
*yit	yac		yì	yeh.	ji 22s		'drunk'
*kyit	khyac	chí?					'hot enough to burn'

In Matisoff's The Loloish Tonal Split Revisited the first four were reconstructed as \*-et while the rest were \*-it.

## \*-i.t

*V-ci.t	chit	ā-chè?	ā-chì	ci.	tš'i 22s	tš'i 55	'goat'
*ri.t	rit	ʎò?	ʎì				'reap'
*g-tsi.t	chit	chì?	tshì	tsui.		tš'ɣ 55	'pinch'
*N-krit	krit	gš?	jɛ				'grind'
*krit					k'u 44		
*N-tit/k				dui.			'soak in water'
*N-kyit		ji?		ji.			'move'
*s-gyit			cì		tsž 55		
*N-tsit	cit	ji?					'split, divide'
*tsit						ts'i 32s	
*N-dzi.t				ceu.			'pinch'
*s-dzi.t	mut-tshit		mɣ-tsi				'beard'
	pā-ci?-mu						



Notes on Other Sets

\*-ek. In Matisoff (1972) this rhyme correspondence is noted. It can be interpreted as an example of an \*-ik rhyme in the vicinity of a preceding r. Thus the examples are \*?brek, \*Ø-prek 'be (68)'; \*tek 'kick (14)' WT rdeg; \*r-lek 'testicle (170)' WT rlig-pa; \*trek, \*?drek 'thunder and lightening (67)'; \*k-rek, \*s-rek 'pheasant'. Only with \*bek 'give (3)' is there no obvious evidence of the vowel lowering influence of the r. A glance at \*(s-)rik 'twist (130)' shows that the rhyme reflexes for this form follow the same pattern as the \*-ek rhymes above. All the above \*-ek rhymes can thus be alternately interpreted as \*-ik rhymes in the vicinity of an r.

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