

KANAURI AM 'PATH'

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The Kanauri and Almora dialects in the Western Himalayas employ a word **am** (or **əm** in D. D. Sharma's recent publications) for 'path', which looks so close to general TB and WT **lam** 'path',¹ but for the missing initial **l-**, that R. Shafer has suspected a genetic link, but could not explain the phonological relationship (Shafer 1974:141). The Kanauri form is apparently not mentioned in Benedict 1972. There are more Kanauri words without the expected **l-**:

<i>Gloss</i>	<i>Kanauri</i>	<i>WT, TB</i>
'path'	am	<i>WT lam</i>
'stone'	uŋ	<i>TB *luŋ</i>
'sweet'	im	<i>TB *lim > WT žim (via *ljim)</i>

TB initial ***l-** is generally reconstructed on the basis of a number of TB languages, including WT. We find, however, that some languages in the Himalayas have regularly changed the ***l-** to the palatal **j-**, at least in one early linguistic layer and/or environment:

<i>Gloss</i>	<i>WT, TB</i>	<i>TGTM</i>	<i>Vayu</i>	<i>Other</i>
'path'	<i>TB *lam</i>	*g-jam		<i>Raji jaŋ</i>
'work'	<i>OT (b-)las</i>	*g-jas		
'sheep'	<i>WT lug</i>	*g-juk		
'stone'	<i>TB *luŋ</i>		juŋ	
'sweet'	<i>TB *lim</i>			

Raji, though at bottom an Austroasiatic language, is within the Almora orbit. This language appears to avoid **-m** in final position, hence the final **-ŋ**.

¹ Language and language family abbreviations:

<i>Lep</i>	Lepcha	<i>TB</i>	Tibeto-Burman
<i>Lush</i>	Lushai	<i>TGTM</i>	Tamang-Gurung-Thakali-Manang
<i>Mik</i>	Mikir	<i>WB</i>	Written Burmese
<i>OT</i>	Old Tibetan	<i>WT</i>	Written Tibetan

A characteristic of the old core stratum of Kanauri is the deletion of TB *j*-. This is not unique among TB languages. WB does the same:

Gloss	TB	WT	Other	but	Kanauri	WB
'day'	*rjak	žag	Lepajak		hrag	rak
'ask'	*rju	žu-	Mik arju < r-ju		rhu (~ rju)	
'hundred'	*b-rja	brgja	Lap za < ja		ra	ə-ra
'stand'	*-rjap	žabs	Mik arjap < *rjap		rap	
'eight'	*-ret/-rjat	brgjad	Lush riat		re	hrac
'hand'		phjag	?æ?		pakh 'wing'	phak 'leaf'
'four'	*b-li	bži < blji			bi, pi	le ^B

Note that in Kanauri the aspirated liquid *rh*- is apparently not necessarily phonemic. Sharma (1992:216) explains that *r*- and *l*- in initial position are in some dialects accompanied by aspiration. In 'four', the *j*-glide is secondary, but may perhaps explain the total loss of *l* in Kanauri, where the development has perhaps been *bli* > *bji* > *bi*, *pi*.

The reason for the complete loss of initial *l*- in Kanauri is now clear: Kanauri belongs to those Himalayan languages, like TGTM, Hayu (Vayu), etc., which had changed *l*- to *j*- at some point. However, traces of this *j*- are preserved in the Raji form *jan* for 'path' and a Kanauri doublet *rju*- for *hru*- 'ask'. Characteristic for Kanauri is now the further step of eliminating all *j*-, including secondary *j*-. Unlike Kanauri, in Burmese the medial *-j*- was lost at a stage before initial *l*- and *r*- became palatal glides.

However, many words in Kanauri dialects do have initial *l*- (e.g., *lug* 'calf'; cf. WT *lug* 'sheep') and *j*- (e.g., *ju* 'rat'). But these items are obvious loans from Tibetan or from elsewhere, and belong to a different linguistic stratum. Also, Kanauri words like *mjak* 'grass', from TB **m-ljak*, may have retained the *j*- because of the complex cluster, unless this is another case of occasional retention of the medial glide (note the doublet *hru* ~ *rju*). The Proto-Tibetan cognate for 'grass' is actually quite close to TB and Kanauri: WT **jag-ma* 'a sort of coarse and thick grass', presumably < **N-žak* < **N-ljak*.

An old stratum of Kanauri thus turns out to be closer to Himalayan languages like Hayu and TGTM than to Tibetan.

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