

## Garó and rGyarong (Suomo) prosodies

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Two recent LTBA papers<sup>1</sup> have shed further light on the prosodies (accents) of Tibeto-Burman. Both Garó and Chepang have for some time now<sup>2</sup> been known to have glottalized reflexes for PTB \*B, to be reconstructed as /rising tone/; cf. the following:<sup>3</sup>

Tone \*B reflexes, in Chinese as well as Tibeto-Karen [TK], are frequently creaky to some degree or even glottalized, e.g. in Nocte and Tangsa (Northern Naga); Mikir; Lotha and Yimchinger (Kuki Naga), leading perhaps to segmentalization /l/ in both Chepang and Garó, with creaky/glottal phonation an alternative possibility for both. This marking of \*B appears to be related to the findings of Ohala and Ewan (1973) that a rising pitch involves more 'effort' than a falling pitch. The key role played here by the RISING factor is shown especially by Mandarin Chinese, which has developed a rising tone from 'low' PST \*A (*xià píng shēng*), recorded by the writer in Northern China as having glottal closure (') and in Kunming (Yunnan) as heavily glottalized.

The Kadai [KD] tonal system, an early loan from the Chinese, provides further data here: in Be (Hainan) the low-rising tone from 'high' \*A has a 'very conspicuous laryngeal constriction' (Hashimoto) whereas the high-level tone [< 'low' \*A] does not; in Tai, as is often pointed out, tone \*B is associated with creakiness but only in the center of distribution of the family, not in Northern Tai nor in the southern (peninsular) dialects of Thai, clearly indicating that it is innovative (cf. the similar picture presented by Japanese accents, where Ramsey has shown that the central Kyoto accent is innovative, the peripheral Tokyo conservative).

It is, in fact, now evident from the excellent description of Garó by Burling that the glottalization there, corresponding to a tonal distinction in

1 Dai Qingxia and Yanmuchu. 1992. "On the status of tones in the Suomo dialect of rGyarong." *LTBA* 15.2:21-31.

Burling, Robbins. 1992. "Garó as a minimal tone language." *LTBA* 15.2:33-51.

2 Paul K. Benedict. 1980. "The Proto-Sino-Tibetan tone/accent system: additional Tibeto-Burman data." Paper presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics.

3 Paul K. Benedict. 1991. "Suprasegmentals in Southeast Asia." In Ratliff, Martha and Eric Schiller, eds. *Papers from the First Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistic Society*, pp. 28-29. Tempe: Arizona State University.

Bodo (fn. 2 source), is a syllabic (prosodic) rather than segmental feature. The situation in Chepang remains in need of clarification, with segmentalization a likely possibility.

In the case of Suomo, the /51/ falling tone is glottalized only in coda -r or -s syllables, which lack the basic contrast with the uniformly glottalized /55/ tone. It would appear that PTB \*A has yielded Suomo /51/, of anticipated /falling tone/ type, while PTB \*B has been leveled off, as often the case in Southeast Asia, giving rise to Suomo /55/ while retaining the glottalization. Suomo also shows a similar tonal distinction in syllables with stop finals, undoubtedly of secondary origin, and has innovated two additional tones, in part playing morphological roles. All of this closely parallels Burmese-Yipho (Burmese-Lolo), which has tone \*1 < PTB \*A, tone \*2 < PTB \*B along with an additional tone \*3 (largely from prefixed \*s-) and a secondarily developed tonal distinction in checked syllables.

The Suomo picture readily lends itself to an interpretation of the above kind but the basic comparative work here remains to be done and it is possible, if perhaps unlikely, that even the /51/ vs. /55/ distinction will also prove to be of secondary origin. If such is not the case however, and the Suomo distinction can be shown to correspond to \*A vs. \*B distinctions elsewhere in TB, it will furnish a degree of support to the reconstruction of /plain/ vs. /creaky/~glottal/ for the basic PTB/PST \*A vs. \*B prosodies, rather than /falling tone/ vs. /rising tone/. The 'creaky' people, however will remain burdened with a problem unknown to the 'tonal' people, viz. how to explain the PBY glottalized tone \*3? The late Alfons Weidert displayed a notable 'creaky' disposition but it turned out that his 'creaky' tone \*B is represented in BY by 'breathy' (if any) phonation and he ended up by failing to devise a prosody of any kind at the PTB level; the 'tonal' way is a lot easier in Chinese (The WAY of the TONE) as well as in TB.

#### REFERENCE

- Ohala, John and William G. Ewan. 1973. "Speed of pitch change." *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 53:345.
- Weidert, Alfons. 1987. *Tibeto-Burman Tonology*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.