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Implosive and preglottalized stops in Kiranti

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1. Introduction

The Kiranti languages are members of the Tibeto-Burman (or Sino-Tibetan) language family. The ethnolinguistic term 'Kiranti' applies to the Tibeto-Burman peoples native to the hill tracts of eastern Nepal, specifically the Limbu and Rai groups. The Limbu are the easternmost group of Kiranti people. The Limbu language is spoken by roughly 254,000 people living in Nepal (HMG 1995). The ethnonym 'Rai' is used to denote different groups speaking closely related languages, i.e. Āṭhpahariyā, Bahing, Bantawa, Chiling, Chamling, Chintang, Dumi, Dungmali, Hayu, Jero, Khaling, Kohi, Kulung, Lohorung, Mewahang, Nachiring, Puma, Sām, Sampang, Sunwar, Thulung, Wambule, Yakkha and Yamphu. The various Rai languages are spoken by around 439,000 individuals in total (HMG 1995). The Kiranti languages were first investigated by Brian Houghton Hodgson (1857, 1858). Modern comprehensive grammatical analyses and sketches have been written on Thulung (Allen 1975), Khaling (Toba 1979), Hayu (Michailovsky 1981, 1988a), Limbu (van Driem 1987), Dumi (van Driem 1993), Āṭhpahariyā (Ebert 1997a), Chamling (Ebert 1997b), Yamphu (Rutgers 1998), Kulung (Tolsma 1999), Wambule (Opgenort 2002 and forthcoming a) and Jero (Opgenort, forthcoming b).

2. Implosive or preglottalized stops in Western Kiranti

Among the Kiranti languages, the Western languages Bahing, Sunwar and Wambule are characterized by the presence of implosive or preglottalized stops in their modern phoneme inventories. Since implosive or preglottalized stop phonemes are not found in other Kiranti languages and are apparently unrelated to the preglottalized stops reconstructed for Proto-Eastern Kiranti and Proto-Kiranti, the implosive or preglottalized stops in Bahing, Sunwar and Wambule must therefore represent a Western Kiranti innovation.

Indeed, it seems to be necessary to reconstruct a Proto-Western Kiranti preglottalized bilabial phoneme /*ʔb-/ (Michailovsky 1994) or perhaps /*ʔw-/ (my view) at some stage in the phonological development of Western Kiranti because of the correspondences between implosive or preglottalized bilabials in Bahing, Sunwar and Wambule. Michailovsky (1988b, 1994) mentions the presence of an implosive /ɓ-/ or preglottalized /ʔb-/ in Bahing and /ʔb-/ or /ʔw-/ in Sunwar. In Bieri and Schulze (1969, 1970, 1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1973a, 1973b), this Sunwar sound is generally transcribed as /bw-/ followed by /a/. Michailovsky adds that this phoneme is pronounced as [ʔw] in some Sunwar dialects. The Bahing implosive appears before other vowels as well. Michailovsky (1988b) argues that the initial implosive or preglottalized Proto-Western Kiranti phoneme /*ʔb-/ represents a preglottalized manner-series or, another possibility, developed from labiovelar /*kw-/. He cites several examples in which Bahing /ʔb-/ corresponds to /kw-/ in the Tibeto-Burman languages Chepang, Magar and Kham. These three so-called 'Magaric' languages are closely related to Kiranti (van Driem 2001:773).

Wambule occupies a special place among the small group of Western Kiranti languages that possess implosive stops because Wambule has two implosive stop phonemes instead of just one, i.e. /ɓ/ and /ɗ/ (Toba VS 2052; Opgenort VS 2055, 2002). The voiced bilabial implosive /ɓ/ can be contrasted with the voiced plosive /b/. The voiced post-

alveolar implosive /ɗ/ can be contrasted with the retroflex plosive /ɖ/ and the alveolar plosive /d/. The phonemic status of the Wambule implosive stops is illustrated in the following series of words, which are transcribed in phonologically based orthography:

bwalcam 'buzz' (v.)	*ɓwalcam* 'mix, mix up, blend'
bamme 'they^{P} were, they^{P} sat'	*ɓamme* 'they^{P} ate us^{I}/him/them^{P}'
dakcam 'like'	*ɗakcam* 'chew, masticate'
ɖi 'liver'	*ɗĩ* 'name'

As in Bahing and Sunwar, Wambule implosives are generally found in word-initial position. Pre-consonantal implosives occur before each of the Wambule vowels and before the phonemic sequences /wa/ and /ya/, e.g. *ɓo* 'chicken, fowl', *ɓwalcam* 'mix, mix up, blend', *ɗĩ* 'name' and *ɗwam* 'sun'. However, implosive stops do not occur in clusters with /l, r/ as a second member, whereas bilabial plosives commonly do, e.g. *pli* 'penis' and *blo* 'bow (for shooting arrows)'. Syllable-final implosive stops have not been found.

Wambule supports Michailovsky's (1988b) idea of a labiovelar origin for Western Kiranti implosive or preglottalized stops and proposes a new source, i.e. modified nasal consonants. The systematic correspondences of the modern Wambule implosives and nasals at the Proto-Kiranti-Magaric, Proto-Kiranti, Proto-Western Kiranti and Proto-Wambule level are presented in 1. The Wambule implosive stops /ɓ-/ and /ɗ-/ are historically unrelated to the preglottalized stops /*ʔb-/ and /*ʔd-/, which are reconstructed for Proto-Eastern Kiranti and Proto-Thulung by Michailovsky (1994), and to the preglottalized stops /*ʔp-/ and /*ʔt-/ reconstructed for Proto-Kiranti by Starostin (1994, 2000). Table 2 shows that the Proto-Kiranti preglottalized phonemes correspond to plain stops and affricates in modern Wambule.

PKM	PK	PWK	PWA	WA	Examples
/*kw-/	/*kw-/	/*ʔw-/	/*ʔɓ-/	/ɓ-/	1-6 (7-11)
	/*m-/	/*m-/	/*ʔm-/		12-15
			/*m-/	/m-/	16-18
	/*n-/	/*n-/	/*ʔn-/	/ɗ-/	19-24
			/*n-/	/n-/	25-26

Table 1. *Correspondences of Wambule implosive stops and nasals*

PK^m	PEK^m	PK^s	PWK	WA	Examples
/*p-/	/*ʔɓ-/	/*p-/	/*p-/[1]	/p-/	28
		/*ʔp-/			31-32
/*t-/	/*ʔɗ-/	/*t-/	/*t-/[2]	/t-/	30
		/*ʔt-/			33-34
		/*ʔc-/	/*c-/	/c-/	35-36
		/*ʔk-/	/*k-/	/k-/	37-38

Table 2. *Correspondences of reconstructed preglottalized phonemes*

1 Except in Thulung, which has /ɓ-/.

2 Except in Thulung, which has /ɗ-/.