

**Bantawa Rai s-, t-, and z-final verb roots:
transitives, intransitives, causatives, and directives¹**

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At the Twelfth International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Paris, 1979, Michailovsky presented a paper, "Tibeto-Burman dental suffixes: evidence from Limbu" (Michailovsky 1979), in which he analysed Limbu verb roots into three phonological classes, two of them based on root-final consonant clusters containing -S or -T, e.g., -PS, -MS, -TT, -NT (together with -S and, in some cases, -T), and the third a contrasting clusterless class containing either a final single consonant or a final vowel, e.g., -P, -M, -N, -R, and -Ø (and, in some cases, -T). To these phonological classes he went on to attribute morphosyntactic categories, transitive, intransitive, and deponent, and the semantic notions "causative," "directive," etc.²

This paper is a corresponding analysis of Bantawa, one of the Rai group of languages (Thulung, Khaling, Bahing, Kulung, etc.), and closely related, within Kiranti, to Limbu. In both Limbu and Bantawa I have analysed the finals of verb roots into three prosodic classes, *s*, *t*, and *z*, on the basis of junction features, and into the seven phonematic units *P*, *T*, *K*, *Ø*, *M*, *N*, and *ŋ* (together with a lateral-final type of root in Bantawa); and I have made a similar attempt to Michailovsky's to ascribe intransitive, transitive, and causative functions (II), and directive and nondirective functions (III) to *t*, *s*, and *z*, though my material is not as comprehensive as his.

1. *Limbu and Bantawa root-final categories.*

In order to show how closely Bantawa resembles Limbu (though the two languages are not mutually intelligible), and, therefore, to prove that the same phonological analysis can reasonably be applied to both these languages, I begin with skeleton prosodic and phonematic analyses of the verb root final in Limbu (A) and Bantawa (B).

¹ This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Eighteenth Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Bangkok, 1985.

² Michailovsky prefers the term "directive" to "benefactive" or "applicative."

A Limbu.

In Table 1, I give the phonetic exponents of the prosodic units **t**, **s**, and **z**, and of the phonematic units **P**, **T**, **K**, etc., as they appear in only one of the five main types of junction, that in which the root is followed by a suffix that is vowel-initial.³ This type of junction provides phonetic criteria for distinguishing all these units except for **T** and **N**, which, in this case, share [-r-]; but in other types of junction **Tz** and **Nz** are phonetically distinguished; e.g., junction in which there is a fricative-initial suffix, (T) [- (t) tɕh-] versus (N) [- nt sh-], as in [ʔaɕɛ (t) tɕhɪʔ] 'he kills us two' and [ʔadzɛ nt shuʔ] 'we two slit it'.

B Bantawa.

Corresponding Bantawa phonetic exponents of the three prosodic categories **t**, **s**, and **z** are given at (1), (2), and (3) respectively in Table 2, but in greater detail than for the Limbu. At (a) I have, in each case, again given the phonetic exponents of **t**, **s**, and **z** in the form in which they appear in junction with a suffix beginning with a vowel; but at (b) the phonetic exponents of these three terms are those appropriate to word-final position (no suffix), and therefore to junction between words (interverbal junction).⁵ A comparison of (1.b) with (3.b) shows that the phonetic exponents of **t** are identical in interverbal junction, as regards /P, K, T, M, ŋ, N/, with those of **z**: [-p, -k, -t, -m, -ŋ, -n]; while (2.b), if compared with (1.b) and (3.b), shows that the same is the case for **s** as regards /M, ŋ, N/, [-m, -ŋ, -n], and very similar as regards Øs and Øz, [- (V) :, -V (:)].

Line (3.b) of Table 2 shows that **N** shares [-n] with **l** for its phonetic exponency in interverbal junction, at (4.b); but (3.a) shows **N** as distinguished from **l** when in junction with a vowel-initial suffix, by either [- : j - / - V : -] or [- n -] as against [- l -], at (4.a).

These comparisons between types of junction show that the vowel-initial-suffix type, at (a), is much more helpful and efficient in providing phonetic criteria for **t**, **s**, and **z**, and in distinguishing **l** from **N**, than the complementarily distributed type of junction at (b), interverbal junction.⁶

³ For all five types of junction see Sprigg 1985, pp. 10-11, 15, 16.

⁵ In the Bantawa examples [t] and [d] symbolize alveolars; in the Limbu, on the other hand, they symbolize dentals.

⁶ The percipience of Senior in giving "two forms for each verb, not merely the verbal noun (in -ma), as was only to be expected in 1908, but also the much more useful imperative form in -e, from which different root classes can be distinguished" is commended in Sprigg 1977. Cf. also Michailovsky (1975:187): "The imperative clearly shows the root final. . . . Some recent word-lists of languages related to Bahing have suffered from the defect that the verb form chosen for quotation has been one from which the root form could not be recovered."

	P	T	K	M	N	Ů	Ø
t	-pt-	-(t)t-	-kt-	-md-	-nd-	--	-v(?)r-
s	-ps-	-(t)tsh-	-(k)kh- -ks-	-ms-	-ntsh-	-ŋkh- -ŋs- ⁴	-v:ɕ-
z	-b-	-r-	-g-	-m-	-r-	-ŋ-	-v/v(j)-
t	ʔepte 'fan it'	mɔ(t)tɛ 'blow it'	ka:kɛ 'jump over'	jɛmɛ 'tattoo him'	pindaŋ 'I jumped about'	-- ---	pɪ(:)rɛ 'give them it'
s	ʔipsaŋ 'I slept'	phe:tshaŋ 'I forgot'	tɕa(k)kɛ 'wear it'	kɛnamsu? 'you smell it'	pɛntshu? 'he puts a good finish on it'	sɔŋkɛ 'sell it' sɔŋsɛ?	phe:ɕɛ 'break wind'
z	jɛbɛ 'stand up'	ɕɛrɛ 'kill it'	laɣɛ 'lick it'	tɔmɛ 'meet him'	tɕɛrɛ 'slit it'	thɔŋɛ 'drink it'	tɔ(j)ɛ 'dig it'

TABLE 1

4 These alternative features in quotation marks, from the Tamur Khola dialect, are quoted from Weidert 1982:5.

Probably the most controversial feature of Table 2 is my having attributed an identical phonetic exponency, in the *t* type of final, at (1), to both T and Ø, not merely in one but in both of the two types of junction (a, b) shown in the table (and, in fact, in all types of junction). How, in that case, can a verb with forms such as [itte, it], which I have classified as Ø*t*, be distinguished from my example of a T*t* verb, with such forms as [sjette, sjet]? My reason for classifying the [itte, it] verb as Ø*t* rather than T*t* is given in (II.B) and (III.B) below; briefly, the reason is that I take [itte, it] to be the *t* forms corresponding to the *Z* forms [i:je, ?i:], which are clearly those of a Ø-final verb. The glosses of these Ø-final root forms are:

- [i:je] 'laugh; come down'
 [?i:] '(he) laughs; (he) comes down'
 [itte] 'laugh at (him); bring it down'
 [it] '(he) laughs at (him); (he) brings (it) down'.

As regards the grammatical categories transitive and causative, and the lexical category "directive" (or "benefactive"), the most revealing example in my Bantawa material has the following set of three forms, *Z*, *S*, and *t*, the root-final phonematic unit being *ŋ*:

- Z*: [duŋe] 'drink (it)'
S: [dɔŋsje] 'offer a drink to (him)'
t: [dɔŋte] 'drink it for X'.

Cf. Limbu: THUŋ tr. 'drink' & THUŋS tr. 'cause to drink, entertain' (Michailovsky 1979:19). I have no other examples in my material as revealing as this. The nearest to it are the two following. In the first, a -M verb, the *Z* form is intransitive, the *S* form transitive, and the *t* form also transitive but not, apparently, directive:

- Z*: [jo:ma] '(he) starved'
S: [jomɔsje] 'starve (it)'
t: [jomte] 'starve (it)'.

In the other, a -K verb, the *t* form is directive and the *Z* and *S* forms nondirective, all three being, apparently, transitive:

- Z*: [ho:je] 'open (it)'
S: [hɔŋsje] 'open (it)'
t: [hɔkte] 'open it for X';

cf. Limbu: [kho:nde] 'open (it)'.

Since sets of three forms are rare and generally unsatisfactory, I have presented my material (in sections II and III below) through pairs of forms.