

Notes on Laha final -l

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1. Laha is among the few Tai-Kadai languages which possess a seemingly exotic final, -l, in addition to the normal set of stop and nasal endings. It has been tempting to believe that this -l will give us another clue for linking Tai-Kadai with Austronesian. As a matter of fact there are examples which may support this expectation, e.g. Laha *jil⁶/zil⁶*: Malay *kecil* 'young/small', Laha *ŋəl³*: Malay *benjal* 'deaf'. Certain forms such as the following, however, remind us that there may be more than one possible AN final corresponding to Laha -l:

'fat/oil'		'rain'	
Laha	<i>məl¹</i>	Laha	<i>jəl²</i>
Formosan:		Formosan:	
Ami	<i>simár</i>	Paiwan	<i>qúd'al</i>
Bunun	<i>símal</i>	Bunun	<i>hódan</i>
Saaroa	<i>ʔimarə</i>	Saaroa	<i>usaʔə</i>
*PMP	<i>himaR</i>	*PMP	<i>quzan</i>

We will discuss this more, in connection with other Tai-Kadai languages, in section 3.

2. AN is certainly not the only Southeast Asian language family which has liquid finals. Both Tibeto-Burman and Austroasiatic possess such finals as well, and either could possibly be sources of Laha -l. For instance, we may also find good matches for 'fat/oil' spread throughout TB subgroups: (Himalayish) Tibetan *mar* Cuona Monpa *mər³⁵*, (Nungish) Dulung *mər³⁵kw³⁵*, (Kamarupan) Damu *mar-kw*, (Qiangic) Gyarung *kə ne mer*, etc.

Also, such Laha forms as those for 'mouth' and 'flower' seem to be most closely related to Tibeto-Burman:

'mouth' ¹		'flower'	
Laha	<i>mul¹</i>	Laha	<i>bal²</i>
Maring	<i>mur</i>	Meche	<i>bibar</i>
Tangkhuil	<i>khə-mor</i>	Bodo	<i>bibár?</i>
Khoibu	<i>mur</i>	Garo	<i>bibal</i>
Limbu	<i>mur-a</i>	Kokborok	<i>bo-bar</i>
Haka Lai	<i>hmur²</i>	Dimasa (blossom)	<i>bar-</i>
Tibetan (gills)	<i>mur</i>	Tibetan (blossom)	<i>'bar-ba</i>

¹ Note Malay *kemur/kumur* 'revolving in the mouth', reconstructed by Dempwolff as PMP **kəmuɣ/*kumuɣ*.

It should be noted here, however, that evidence of TB liquid finals has been found mostly in western branches. Lolo-Burmese speakers, which we assume to be the ones who have most likely come in contact with Laha, have not retained such finals well. For example, Naxi (Lijiang) *mɔ*³¹, Yi (Dafang) *mi*³³ 'fat/oil'²; Bisu *man-pɔŋ*, Hani (Dazhai) *me*³¹ *bɔ*³¹, Lisu (Nujiang) *mu*³¹ *lu*³⁵, Yi (Dafang) *mi*³³ *pu*²¹ < Proto-Loloish **(C)me*² 'mouth'; Burmese *pàn*, Zaiwa *pan*²¹, Lisu (Northern) *ba*³⁵ *ba*⁴⁴, Naxi (Lijiang) *ba*³¹ (but note Nusu *va*⁵³ *u*³¹) 'flower'. Thus, if the forms came through contact, we may have to assume that the Lolo-Burmese people in question must still have kept the liquid final(s) or that the contact had antedated Proto-Lolo-Burmese.³

Another etymon, 'fly (v.)', is worth noting here. There seem to be at least two possible TB affiliations for this word, **pur/pir* and **byer*. The former is probably related to Laha and Kam-Sui, the latter with Tai:

'fly (v.) ₁ ' ⁴		'fly (v.) ₂ '	
Laha	po'l ⁴	Saek	bwl A1
Kam	pən C1	Siamese	bin A1
WT	'phur-ba	Bokar	bjar
Zeku	mphər	Abor-Miri	ber
Lhasa	phir	Bahing	byer
Gurung	pihri ba	Gurung	bir ^h -la
Rumdali	per ^h ma	Rumdali	berō
Limbu	pE:r-	Limbu	bersi
Thakali	pyur ^h -wa	Damu	biar ra
Kulung	perte	Dulong	bě ⁵³
Jingpho	pjen ³³	Trung	biel

This word, however, seems to be a Pan-SEA etymon⁵, also widespread in Austroasiatic languages. The AA forms seem to belong to 'fly₁'.

Praj (Khmuic)	phar	Kui (Katuic)	paar
Mu'o'ng (Vietic)	pāl	Jeh (Bahnaric)	pāl
Nyahkur (Monic)	phar	Proto-Waic	*pvr

² Lolo-Burmese languages use other roots in this area, including **tsil* for the noun (WB *chi*, 'fat, oil', *khraŋ-chi* 'marrow') and **tsow* for the stative verb 'be fat' (WB *chu*, N. Lisu *tshw*³³, Lahu *chu*, etc.)

³ Another choice would be to stipulate that some of those western TB people used to be further east, bordering on Kadai-speaking areas.

⁴ Note various related Old/Middle Chinese forms *piwər/pjwəi* A, *piwən/pjuən* A, and *piwən/pjuən* C. The last one has departing tone corresponding well with Lakkja *phon* B1. Still another TB root for 'fly' with labial initial is **byam*.

⁵ Related forms have not been well attested in AN. But note some of the following Formosan forms: Paiwan (Makazayazaya) *mipərər*, Saaroa *miapititi*.

In connection with Austroasiatic, we may further mention words like the following:

	Laha		AA
'arrow'	lal ³	<i>Muong</i>	lāl
'grandchild'	klal ³	<i>Muong</i>	klal 'boy/child'
'bamboo shoot'	pul ³	<i>Muong</i>	pūl
'buy'	col ³	<i>Kui</i>	toor
'shallow' ⁶	dol ³	<i>PW</i>	*dol/r;
		<i>NyK</i>	kəḍaḷ
'tasty'	məl ²	<i>NyK</i>	məl

Also worth noticing is Laha ləl¹ 'tongue'⁷ Sach (Vietic) ləl (Vietnamese *lưỡi* < PMK*-s, cf. Thavung *laŋ* etc.). The similarity between the forms for 'tongue' could be accidental, but note the parallel in Saek təl⁶ 'mushroom' Bulang (Palaungic) təl¹, Proto-Waic *tes.

3. The other two Tai-Kadai languages known to have final -l are a Baisha dialect of Hlai (Wang and Qian 1951) and Saek. Since these languages represent separate branches of Tai-Kadai, it would be interesting to see what connection their -l finals could have with each other.

3.1. Baisha -l usually corresponds to -w in other Hlai dialects. It appears, however, only after Proto-Hlai *-ǎ-. For instance, Baisha fəw¹ Baoding vəw¹ 'navel', but Baisha pla:l³ Baoding plaw³ 'near'. It is thus possible to consider this -l as a conditioned reflex of final *-w, which may be phonetically assumed to be a velar approximant -ɰ or a velarized -l.

Laha usually has zero final corresponding to Baisha -l⁸; this Laha development resembles Jiamao (a Hlai language).⁹

⁶ Siamese has *tuwn* C1. The root is not very widespread within Tai (no reconstructed form in Li's Proto-Tai). Waic forms point to a voiced initial, but cf. also Kui *nthūur*. The connection among these forms is uncertain (note that both Kui and Nyahkur normally distinguish final -r and -l).

⁷ Proto-Tai shows initial *l-: Siamese *lin*, Saek *li:n* C2. But Hlai forms seem to point to *tl-, Savina's Hlai *tlɛn*, Baisha *li:n*³⁵, Heitu *diən*³. The PMP reconstruction is **dilah*, with somewhat irregular reflexes in daughter languages: Tagalog *dilah*, Malay *lidah*, Hova *lela*⁴. Some Formosan languages from old sources show interesting trisyllabic forms: Favorlang *tatsira*, Siraya *dadila(h)*, which may explain some peculiarities. The connection among the forms is uncertain.

⁸ Note that all these forms have tone *3 in Hlai, a fact which may turn out to be significant later.

⁹ For instance, Jiamao *la*¹ 'near' and *tha*¹ 'short'.

	Baisha	Baoding	Laha	Tai (Lungming)
'near'	pla:l ³	plaw ³	kla ¹	kjau C1
'light (≠heavy)'	kha:l ³	khaw ³	kha ⁶	- ¹⁰
'short (≠tall)'	t'a:l ³	thaw ³	ta ⁶	tau C1 'below' ¹¹
'grandma'	tfa:l ³	tsaw ³	ja ⁴	jaa B2

However, there are also Laha forms like **mal**² 'new' and **pal**³ 'wilderness' which have similar Tai rhyme reflexes of the above type (cf. Lungming **mau** B1 and **paa** B1 respectively).¹² We may temporarily assume ***-l** > Laha **-l** after **-a-**, but ***-l** > Laha **-u** after **-ā-** (and then **-ā-** > **-a** following **-u** > **Ø**). The development seems to mirror that of Baisha, where **-l** > **-l** after **-ā-** (with then the lengthening of the preceding vowel). As we have just seen, however, the short/long (**-ā/-a-**) distinction does not always match with that of Tai (cf. 'grandma' and 'new').

'Grandchild' is a good form which shows Laha **-l** corresponding to Baisha **-l** and to **-n** in most other languages. We may temporarily label this type of correspondence ***-l**. The validity of certain examples here remains tentative.

	Baisha	Baoding	Laha	Others
'grandchild'	la:l ¹	-	klal ³	laan ² (Saek)
'return'	pa:l ¹	pəu ²	pəl ¹ 'turn'	pen ⁵⁵ (Gelao)
'rise'	va:l ²	ʔwau ²	ol ³ 'turn up'	-

3.2. Saek **-l** appears in almost a hundred forms and may follow any vowel. Laha often has **-l** corresponding to Saek **-l**, but also has **-l** corresponding to Saek **-n** in certain forms. Where Baisha forms can be found, they normally show **-ŋ** (<**-n**) for these words:

*-L	Laha	Saek	Baisha	Tai (Siamese)
'snore' ^{13,14}	kal ³	tlɛl ¹	fa:ŋ ¹	kron A1
'husked rice'	fal ⁵	saal ²	-	saan A1
'shake'	ʃal ⁴	se ⁶	-	san B1
'fat/oil' ¹⁵	ma ¹	mal	-	man A2
'toad'	ʃal ³	ʃal ⁴	(ka:l ²)	khan- A2 (Lao)
'shallow'	dol ³	-	t'uiŋ ¹	turun C1

¹⁰ Cf. NyK (Nam Lau dialect) **hyal**, (Taling Chan dialect) **khəygal**.

¹¹ Cf. NyK (Nam Lau dialect) **gal**, (Taling Chan dialect) **cgr** 'short/low'. Siamese (and most Southwestern Tai) also have **san** C1 'short'. The connection among the forms is uncertain.

¹² Many Hlai dialects, including Baisha, have another form for 'new': **no**³. But note Heitu **man**⁴ and Baoding **pain**¹.

¹³ Note the following TB forms: Thakali **kəhr-kər**, Thulung **khər-**, Khaling **khər-**, Dimasa **goro**, Chamling **ghura**, Pattani **gor-gor-si**.

¹⁴ For Saek, Gedney also lists other variants: **tlen**¹ and **trei**¹.

¹⁵ The Saek form is from Haudricourt (1963). Gedney (1993) has **man**⁴.