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TIDDIM CHIN TONES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE*

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Tiddim Chin shows three tones in smooth syllables (syllables ending with sonorants and vowels): rising, level and falling, which are numbered by Henderson (1965) as tones 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Long checked syllables (syllables with long vowels ending with stops) also occur with these three tones. Short checked syllables only occur with a low level tone, which has been considered to be an allotone of tone 3. For convenience of discussion in this article I will refer to this latter tone as tone 4.

In this paper, I propose that the three tones in smooth syllables arise from different types of laryngeal endings interacting with vowel length, and that original checked syllables only took two tones, also depending on vowel length. Tiddim verbs have two alternating forms, usually with different tones, labelled as Form I and Form II. Since the latter is a derivation of the former, Form I verbs will be taken as the basis for our discussion. We will comment on the verbal derivation in our last section.[1]

1. CHECKED SYLLABLES: SHORT (TONE 4) VS LONG (TONE 1)

1.1. I shall first demonstrate that only two tones were original to checked syllables, depending on the length of the preceding vowels. Synchronic short checked syllables always take tone 4. Long checked syllables, however, are recorded with all three of the other tones. Among these, tone 1 (which occurs most frequently) historically reflects early long checked syllables; tone 2 and tone 3 do not. See Tables 1 and 2; Lushai forms are also provided for comparison.

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1 Language name abbreviations:

TB	Tibeto-Burman	PTB	Proto-Tibeto-Burman
WB	Written Burmese	WT	Written Tibetan
OC	Old Chinese	rGy	rGyalrong

	Tiddim	Lushai
'weep'	kap^{4}	ʈap
'snot'	nap^{4}	hnap
'lac'	gip^{4}	khrip (WB)
'eye'	mit^{4}	mit
'kill'	that^{4}	sat (WB)
'six'	guk^{4}	ruk
'pig'	vok^{4}	vok
'pungent'	thak^{4}	thak
'rain'	gua?^{4}	rua?
'plant (v.)'	tu?^{4}	tu?

Table 1. Checked syllables with short vowels.

	Tiddim	Lushai
'fan'	za:p^{1}	za:p
'suck'	te:p^{1}	fe:p
'lungs'	tuap^{1}	cuap
'leech'	li:t^{1}	hli:t
'worm'	hu:t^{1}	hu:t
'shave'	me:t^{1}	me:t
'eight'	giat^{1}	riat
'rib'	na:k^{1}	na:k
'walk'	va:k^{1}	va:k
'lick'	liak^{1}	liak
'thunderbolt'	ke:k^{1}	ʈe:k

Table 2. Checked syllables with long vowels.

With tones 2 and 3, synchronic checked syllables with velar [-k] ending usually come from original syllables with final **-r*. See Table 3; again Lushai forms are also provided.

	Tiddim	Lushai
'fowl'	a:k^2	a:r
'bell'	da:k^2	da:r
'flower'	pa:k^2	pa:r
'leprosy'	pha:k^2	pha:r
'pine tree'	ta:k^2	ta:r
'light' (v.)	va:k^2	va:r 'light (not dark)'
'spread'	za:k^2	za:r
'sell'	zuak^2	zuar
'nose'	na:k^3	hna:r

*Table 3. Synchronic checked syllables from original syllables ending with *-r.*

A few other words, especially ones with final *-p* and *-t*, cannot be explained as derived from **-r*. But most are likely to be recent loans coming with economic and social changes. For examples, *ma:t*^{2} 'a quarter dollar', *sa:p*^{2} 'pay rent', *da:t*^{3} 'electricity', etc. It should also be noted that checked syllables with tone 3 are indeed rare, and are often derived forms having a specific meaning or a different part of speech, e.g. *a:t*^{3} 'cut on someone's behalf' from *a:t*^{1} 'cut', *na:k*^{3} 'nose' (the nominal form of *na:k*^{2} 'breathe').

1.2. So, we may set up historical tones for checked syllables based on vowel length as follows (Table 4). I use *-k* to represent stop endings in general; *-v* stands for short vowels and *-vv* for long vowels and diphthongs.

	Checked endings
	***-k**
***-v**	**vk^4**
***-vv**	**vvk^1**

Table 4. Historical tones for checked syllables based on vowel length.

2. TENSE SYLLABLES: SHORT (TONE 4) VS. LONG (TONE 1)

2.1. Short checked syllables may end with an oral or glottal stop (*-vp*, *-vt*, *-vk* and *-v?* ; cf. Table 1). However, the glottal stop ending does not occur with long checked syllables. That the glottal stop may only occur with short vowels is not surprising. Synchronically, the syllable type *-v?* may be interpreted as a counterpart of the *-vv* type, i.e. open syllables whose vowels are always long. The possibility that there used to be a **-vv?* type cannot be ruled out, however.

If this **-vv?* type did exist, it would most likely behave like **-vvk* in developing tone 1, in contrast with short stopped syllables (**-vk* and **-v?*) which take tone 4. This, together with the fact that tone 1 in open syllables is frequently accompanied by glottal constriction, leads to my hypothesis that the synchronic open rime with tone 1 (rising tone) originally came from syllables with long vowels ending with a glottal stop. Cognates found in Chepang (Central Nepal) consistently support this hypothesis. See Table 5 (Chepang data from Caughley 1972).

	Tiddim	Chepang
'bird'	va:^{1}	wa?
'rat'	zu:^{1}	yu?
'dog'	?wi:^{1}	kuy?
'child'	ta:^{1}	co?
'water'	tu:i^{1}	ti?
'flesh'	sa^{1}	sja?
'blood'	si:^{1}	wəi?
'thin'	pa:^{1}	be?
'tail'	mei^{1}	me?
'buy'	lei^{1}	le?
'fire'	mei^{1}	hme?
'steal'	gu:^{1}	ku?
'fish'	ŋa:^{1}	ŋa?
'left'	vei^{1}	we?
'bitter'	xa:^{1}	khá? (Karen Pho-Moulmein)
'chin'	kha:^{1}	ka? (Tangsa)

*Table 5. Synchronic open syllables with tone 1 originally from syllables ending with *-?.* [2]

[2] Lolo-Burmese cognates to these forms are all reflexes of PLB Tone *2. This extremely interesting fact suggests that at least one of the sources of PLB *2 is final glottal stop. [Ed.]