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THE SINO-TIBETAN TONOGENETIC LARYNGEAL RECONSTRUCTION THEORY

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1. Failure to establish a purely segmental C_i-derived tonogenetic reconstruction theory
2. The evidence of Chinese: Phonation types
3. The preliminaries: What is a reconstruction theory?
4. Evidence of tonal and non-tonal developments in different subgroups of Tibeto-Burman
5. The verbal alternation patterns of Kuki-Chin and Eastern Baric-II
6. Sample sets of reconstructed etyma for Tibeto-Burman tonal categories I, II, and III.

[SUMMARY]

Tibeto-Burman reconstructional theories explaining tonogenesis through the nature of the initial consonant of the syllable are unable to take into account the peculiar tonological developments in Kuki-Naga and Baric languages. The assumption of either a two tone or three tone *system of the proto-language fails on similar grounds.* The reconstructional difficulties encountered by such theories are briefly recapitulated. At the same time this *raises the question of what entity a theory is like. The* question is answered by applying a functional theory concept to historical linguistics. It is adopted from Sneed 1971 and Balzer/Sneed 1978, which represent the most sophisticated attempts to characterize the notion of theory in empirical science. The functional view guarantees a strict and complete division of reconstructional (marked by asterisk and italics) and comparative (italics only) entities within an historical theory. The evidence for *establishing a Tibeto-Burman tonogenetic* laryngeal reconstruction theory is divided into three sections: 1) the

external evidence in the form of Archaic Chinese phonation types (2.), 2) the evidence of tonal and non-tonal developments in the Kuki-Naga, Baric and Kachin subgroups of Tibeto-Burman (4.), and 3) the verbal alternation patterns of Kuki-Chin and two Eastern Baric languages (5.). The latter are historically explained by applying the laryngeal reconstruction system consisting of two laryngeals and five phonation types. Sample sets of reconstructed etyma for the major Tibeto-Burman tonal categories conclude the article.

[Abbreviations of Kuki-Naga and Baric languages]

Kuki-Naga languages:

Ag. Angami (Naga-I subgroup, Benedict's Southern Naga, Shafer's Eastern Branch)
An. Anal (Old Kuki)
Ao Ao (Naga-II subgroup, Benedict and Shafer's Northern Naga)
Ck. Chakhesang or Chokri (Naga-I)
Kh. Khezha (Naga-I)
Kom Kom (Old Kuki)
La. Lakher (a separate Kuki-Chin subgroup)
Lg. Lamgang (Old Kuki)
Li. Liangmei (Naga-III or Naga-Kuki transition group, Benedict's Western Kuki, Shafer's Western Branch)
Lo. Lotha (Naga-II)
Lu. Lushai (Central Kuki)
Mao Mao or Imemei or Sopvoma (Naga-I)
Mi. Mikir
Mn. Manipuri or Meithei
NR Northern Rengma or Ntenyi (Naga-I to Naga-II transition)
Ro. Rongmei (Naga-III)
Sa. Sangtam (Naga-II)
Se. Sema (Naga-I)
SR Southern Rengma (Naga-I)
Ta. Tangkhul (Naga-III, Shafer's Luhupa Branch)
Th. Thadou Kuki (Northern Kuki)
Ti. Tiddim Chin (Northern Kuki)
Yi. Yimchunger or Yachumi (Naga-II)
Ze. Zemei or Zeliang or Empeo (Naga-III)

Baric languages:
Bo. Boro (West Assam subgroup)
Ch. Chang (Eastern Naga subgroup, = Eastern Baric-I)
Ga. Garo (West Assam subgroup)
Km. Khiamngan (Eastern Naga subgroup, = Eastern Baric-I)
Ko. Konyak (Eastern Naga/Tamlu forms usually quoted)
Ko.(T) Tamlu and Tanhai dialects of Konyak
Ko.(W) Wakching and Wanching dialects of Konyak
No. Nocte or Namsangia (Arunachal subgroup, = Eastern Baric-II)
Ts. Tangsa or Moshang (Arunachal subgroup, Eastern Baric-II)

All other abbreviations are introduced in the text.

1. FAILURE TO ESTABLISH A PURELY SEGMENTAL C_i-DERIVED TONOGENETIC RECONSTRUCTION THEORY.

Much of the recent development in Sino-Tibetan (ST) approaches comparison with a scientific revolution: A wealth of descriptively adequate data in almost all subgroups of Tibeto-Burman (TB) has sprung forth within the last two decades. As seems fitting to its comparison with a scientific revolution, it is difficult, if not impossible, to combine the new linguistic material with the older ideas of ST (and in particular TB) comparative reconstruction mainly developed from unreliable, scattered, inadequate and unsystematic data records. From the present point of view, expositions of ST linguistic reconstruction theory such as Benedict 1972a (henceforth STC) and Shafer 1974 are the culminating points of a scholarly tradition that began in the first half of the 19th century. It would be a futile task to search in these works for the answers to such tantalizing problems as those which follow, and which will be the primary concern of this article:

a) Why do, within the Kuki-Naga (KN) subgroup of TB, and within tonal category (TC) II, a large number of languages such as Lushai, Mon, Lamgang, Tangkhul, Zemei, Angami, Chakhesang, Khezha, Mao, Northern Rengma, Lotha, Yimchunger etc. have a two-fold tonological distinction of (in terms of synchronously descriptive observation) open syllable nouns

such that 1) the majority of well established etyma exhibit tonological development different from closed syllable TC-II nouns and 2) only a minority of eight etyma agree in their tonological development with closed syllable TC-II nouns?

b) Why is a differentiation of tonological development similar to a) not observable for TC-I in any major TB subgroup (that is, Kuki-Naga, Lolo-Burmese, Baric, and Kachin (Jinghpaw), disregarding Tibetan and other Himalayish subgroups for the obvious reason of very scarce tonological developments)?

c) Why is the tonological development of TC-III in some KN languages identical with the tonological development of TC-I, in some other KN languages identical with the tonological development of TC-II?

d) Why does the verbal paradigm of Lushai and a fairly large number of Central and Northern Kuki languages have different tonological developments depending on the syntactic states of finiteness versus non-finiteness?

e) Why does a small number of Eastern Baric (EB) languages have, in comparative terms, the same tonological development as the Kuki languages in question d)?

f) Why, within the same TB subgroup, do we find evidence of languages having no tone system at all, languages with moderately tonological contrast, and languages with highly developed tonological contrast (an observation holding true for KN, the Baric and the Lolo-Burmese languages)?

g) What is the historical importance of the primary syllable division into glottalized versus non-glottalized syllables in Garo and Boro?

h) What is the historical importance of final glottal stop, which need not necessarily surface in the phonemic structure, in disparate languages of different TB subgroups such as Nocte, Tangsa, Mikir and Lotha Naga?

This list of problems can easily be multiplied when taking into account language-specific tonological developments that apparently do not follow the main line of development traceable through inter-language comparison. The best course to be taken in the ocean of tonological data is a very dangerous one: Our intuition ought to tell us what kind of explanatory