Laha reexamined

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A preliminary note on this North Vietnam language, based on very limited material gleaned from a 1972 Vietnamese source, is included in Benedict 1975 ("ATLC": [Introduction to Glossary] 186-900). A later Russian-Vietnamese work (Sointsev et al., eds. 1986) on one of the three known dialects, Khla-Phlao (KP)\(^1\), now provides excellent material for a full analysis of Laha, with findings as outlined below. Note must be made, however, of a major complicating factor: the language is spoken in an area (Than-Uyên, Thuận-Châu) well south of the China border and, along with the anticipated Vietnamese loans, displays marked influence from the neighboring White Tai and related languages, e.g., in KP the numerals above 'four' have been borrowed from Tai. This has yielded two lexical layers, an earlier Kadai-level along with a later Tai-level, yielding a variety of reflexes, with many problems still awaiting solution.

1. Consonants.

The Laha consonants are presented in Table 1.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
p & pl & ph & phl & b & m & ml & v/w \\
t & th & d & s & n & l & \\
c & ĕ & y-z & \\
k & kl & kh & khl & ī & \\
? & & h & \\
\end{array}
\]

*Table 1*

Initial v- is in complementary distribution with final -v; z- is a free variant of y- and is apparently earlier in some forms (see 'rain' under 9).

The consonantal pattern is of the Tai type, perhaps showing Tai influence, and the historical development is also similar, including *?b- >

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\(^1\) For a list of language, reference, and other abbreviations, see the Appendix. [Ed.]
b-, *?d- > d- [d-]; also *?dz- > z- via *dz- (in 'rain'). Post-velars merged with velars, with both *kh- and *q(h)- (= PT *x-) > kh-, but *G- (= PT *γ-) > k- vs. *g- > kh-. The latter parallels *b- > pʰ- and *d- > th-, with p- or t- reflexes seemingly pointing to Tai loans, e.g., paⁿ 'carry on back', PT *ba (A2/B2). Note c- for *j- in caⁿ 'rough', PT *ja (A2) and the variation shown by the following:

1. Laha saⁿ¹ 'early', PT *ja (A2)
2. Laha seⁿ⁵ 'male/man', SW/C-Tai (SW/CT) *jaay (A2) ~ NT *saay (A1)
3. Laha caaⁿ⁴ 'pestle', PT *saak
4. Laha cot⁴ 'tail', NT *cot 'end', SWT sut 'end', Buyang šut¹⁴ 'tail'.

Note also s- for *z-:

5. Laha səⁿ² 'straight/erect', PT *zə (C2).

Both p- and pʰ- show ties with PT *f- ~ *v-, with v- for PT *w-; also Laha h- corresponds to PT initial *r-, while Laha -l- corresponds to PT medial *r-.

2. Vowels.

The Laha vowels are shown in Table 2.

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  u  i  iø  iy  ie  o  e  e  ε  a  œ
    aa
```

Table 2

This is essentially the basic Tai pattern, with diphthongs maintained but with a length distinction only for /a/. The actual rimes, however, tend to be idiosyncratic, with -øy appearing at times for an anticipated *-i, -əv for *-u or *-av, as well as -ov for *-aw.

For dyads, the anticipated forms with medial -l- are found:

(6) Laha pləŋ⁶ 'leech', PT *p-ləŋ (A1)
(7) Laha plɔk⁴ 'bracelet', PT *p-lɔk 'ring, band'
(8) Laha bla² 'fish', PT *p-lə (A1)³
(9) Laha phləŋ⁶ 'bee', PT *ph-rəŋ (B1)
(10) Laha phləw⁴ 'sweep', PT *phəw (B1) 'sweep, clean' (see Li 1977), for *ph-ɾəw (B1).⁴ Here disambiguating cognates are lacking; Laha plays a key role.
(11) Laha phləat¹ 'slip/slide', PT *b-ləat 'slip and fall'.

Note Laha phl- for a secondary cluster (as opposed to a dyad) in the following:

(12) Laha phləa⁶ 'knife', PT *bra (B2) 'knife (dao), sword' (possibly an early loan).

Note also:

(13) Laha plaat⁴ 'blood', PT *ləat⁵.

For PAT/PKD-level clusters (see the Table in Benedict 1991; also Benedict 1990a:75), the Laha reflexes vary:

(14) PAT/PKD *pr > Laha /t/ (ta³ 'eye')
(15) PAT/PKD *pl > Laha /ph/ (phəŋ⁵ 'die' ~ phən² 'kill')
    (see under 9)
(16) PAT/PKD *pl > Laha /p/ (paal³ 'forest')
(17) PAT/PKD *br (preglottalized) > Laha /d/ (dəp 'unripe/raw')
(18) PAT/PKD *bl > Laha /th/ via *d (thəw⁴ 'ashes').

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² For the distinction between 'clusters' and 'dyads' (the latter reflecting disyllabic prototypes) see Benedict 1989a.
³ Note the Laha voiced initial.
⁴ For various reasons, Benedict and Li Fang Kuei use the symbols B and C for opposite tonal categories of Proto-Tai: Benedict's "B" corresponds to Li's "C" (written with məaj tho in Siamese), while Benedict's "C" corresponds to Li's "B" (written with məaj pəek). This word 'sweep' is particularly confusing in this respect: as the Siamese spelling มัวฟ ผ่ว shows, this word belongs to Li's Tone *C1, and is so marked in the text of Li 1977 (p. 64); however, in the Index to Li 1977 (p. 354) it is erroneously cited as "B1." [Ed.]
⁵ See Benedict 1989b.
4. **Final -1.**

See my forthcoming paper on Saek in *Comparative Kadai II* for details of comparisons with Saek -1 as well as White Sand Li -1.

5. **Tones.**

Laha has three high tones (including one glottalized; indicated by an underline, 55) and three low tones, with the following correspondences with Tai tones (*B/C = *C/B of F. K. Li; the numerals in the chart refer to the number of examples found for each Laha/PT tonal correspondence). See Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laha</th>
<th>1 /55/</th>
<th>2 /55/</th>
<th>3 /53/</th>
<th>4 /22/</th>
<th>5 /21/</th>
<th>6 /14/</th>
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<td>A1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3**

Tone 5 shows some association with aspiration (initials: stop + h, h-, s-), especially for A1. There is only one exception:

(19) Laha ɲəŋ 'pond', PT ʰɲʊŋ (A1).

Syllables with *voiced initials and stopped finals (PTai Tone *D2) correspond to Laha Tone 1 /55/, while stopped syllables with *voiceless initials (PTai Tone *D1) correspond to Laha Tone 4 /22/, with a very consistent pattern, allowing, e.g., ḫot1 'curved/crooked', to be grouped with PT *gɔt 'bent, winding', rather than with PT *kɔt 'coil' ~ 'bent/curved'. Laha parallels Be in the tonal flipflop here; note also that, unlike Tai, the glottalized tone here (2) is completely dissociated from tone *B and linked rather with *A; this again parallels Be, where tone 1 ('low-rising legato tone with very conspicuous laryngeal constriction towards the
end of the syllable\textsuperscript{6}) closely corresponds to PT *A1. Note also that the high-level Be tone 2 corresponds to PT *A2, again a tonal flipflop.

6. 

\textit{Prefixed k}. 

This element occurs occasionally, usually with nouns, and is much commoner in Publao (qa-) and in Pupeo, rare in Laqua (Bonifacy 1905). Its pattern of occurrence is markedly irregular, e.g., for 'eye' only in the Than-Uyên (TU) dialect of Laha (kəta). Lati/Laji has ?a- in a similar role; cf. Laha kdey\textsuperscript{3} 'tiger', Lati a-ti, Laji ?a-te\textsuperscript{35}. The source in most if not all instances appears to be the ubiquitous (AN/KD/MY/Jp) PAT *q(a)- ~ (unstressed) *k(ä)- prefix (ATLC:147), reflected elsewhere in KD at times by either ?- or 'high' (< *surd initial) tone:

(20) Laha kəden\textsuperscript{3} 'nape of neck' ~ kəden\textsuperscript{3} 'occiput'; cf. NT (Buyi) *?rəden (Bl) 'nape'; PKD *?rəden (Bl) 'neck

(21) Laha kmaan\textsuperscript{1} 'devil': PKS *maan (A1) 'ghost/spirit'.

In this second root, however, Tai exhibits variation between the *k- prefix and the *?u- marker (see Benedict 1988):

(22) SWT *hmaan (A1) < *?maan (A1) 'imaginary evil spirit supposed to live on fish' (Ahom) ~ [bedevil:] make imprecations against, curse; shame' ~ NT *mvaan (A2) 'ghost/spirit' (through vocalic transfer [VT]),

while Hlai reflects a destressed (*?u- > ?ə-) version:

(23) P-Hlai *məan\textsuperscript{4} [bedeviler:] sorcerer' (through VT).

Compare the following pair of roots:

(24) PAT *?alak > PAN and PKD *(?u-)alak 'child' (Jp. wara- < *u-a[ak]); PKS *laak (D2) and Laha laak\textsuperscript{1} (through VT, without prefixation); SW/CT *luuk (D2) ~ (via destressing) *?lįk (D2) (Lao only) ~ NT *?lįk (D2), all < *?u- marked; P-Hlai *?lįk (cf. 'sorcerer')

(25) PAT/PAN *(qa-) [1,1]ima 'hand; five'; PKD *(qa-)lima, with *l- reflected via metathesis in KD only in the doublet "five" series (Gelao: Duoluo group m1- forms). 'Hand' is represented

\textsuperscript{6} Hashimoto 1980:vii.
by SW/CT *mə < *myə (A2) (through VT) and Laha ma2, both unprefixixed; PKS *myə (A1/A2), reflecting variable *q- prefixation; Pubiao qa-hmi213, P-Hlai *məi1, with prefixed kə (Jiamao) ~ i- < *u- (Tongsheng).

Before -l- there is merging with velar + -l- clusters:

(26) Laha kluŋ2 'star'; cf. Pupeo kaluoŋ, Pubiao qeluoŋ33, but Laqua (Bonifacy 1905) luŋ

(27) Laha kløy3 'float; flow'; cf. PT *hl(u)ay (A1) 'flow'

(28) Laha klaal3 'grandchild' ≠ lalaal3 'child of bow: arrow' (note TB parallels), both reflecting *ka- through VT. Cf. Be 101 < *hlaal (A1) 'lad' (with VT) ~ lan1 < *hlaal (A1) 'grandchild' (without VT); P-Hlai *[1/ʔ]1a1 'small' child'; PT *hlān (A1) 'grandchild'; PKS *khlān (A1) 'grandchild'; Lakkia khyan (A1) 'grandchild'; Gelao (Wanzl) klu1 'grandchild', from *klaalA; cf. su1 'rice' (gloss from comparative list in Chen 1984), PKD (Tai/Laha) *saalA 'husked' rice', itself a VT form; cf. PAN (Paiwanic) *qasal 'husked/unhusked' rice'; the KD root here is a partially reduplicated derivative of PAT-level *laah(-lāh); cf. Saiasiyat (Paiwanic) olāh < *ulah, with the *ʔu- marker commonly employed with younger-than-Ego kin terms, for 'grandchild'.

Laha khl- represents an earlier cluster/dyad rather than the *k- prefix, notably in khla2 'ear', PKS *khra (A1), despite the related NT *ría (A2) (see Benedict 1989c, pp. 3-4).

7. **Prefixed *m-**.

The Kala-Phlao dialect of Laha has this only in mna5 'tomorrow' and four faunal terms. It is more prominent in the Than-Uyen dialect, in 'moon', 'earth', 'head) hair', 'bird' (manok, looking strangely like PAN *manuk < PAT *mamrok; PKD *mrōk), 'egg', 'sugarcane'; also for k- in 'star' (məluŋ), paralleling BB mluŋ. This prefix is typical for Lati/Laji and is also found in Buyang; it appears to be a KD innovation.

8. **Infixed -n-**.

This occurs only in mal1 'fat/grease/oil', mnaal1 'fat/stout', from *m-1-a11 through dissimilation. Compare PT *mal (A2) (Haudricourt 1963
cites /məl²/ for Saek) ‘fat/grease/oil; greasy, oily’; PKS *mən (A2) ‘fat/grease/oil’; also the infixed derivatives: P-Gelao *m-1an²/6 < *m-1-a1²/6; Duoluo (LiuZhi) mIan¹/2 ‘fat/grease/oil’, Kelao (Bonifacь 1905) nœ ‘oil’ ~ nu (compounded with ‘pig’) ‘fat/grease’; Aou (Pudil) miaŋ⁵/6 ‘sesame [oil] (taste)’; Gao (Wanzi) nan² ‘fat/grease/oil; fat/stout’; Buyang nœn⁴⁴, Publao nìn⁴³ ‘fat/stout’; Laqua nœ ‘fat/grease’ (Bonifacь 1905); Lati mœn ‘oil’ ~ (compounded with ‘pig’) ‘fat/grease’ (ibid.); cf. PAN (Formosan/Philippines) *sim arenas ‘fat/grease (animal)’. Infixed *-1- is well attested in AN and there is other evidence for it within KD, notably in Gelao forms for ‘tooth’, ‘dream’, and ‘year’ (see Benedict 1990b).

9. *Forms of special interest.*

Laha presents a number of forms of special interest, including one numeral, three pronouns/delictics, as well as several items with final -1 and a pair of cultural/historical import:

(29) ‘six’: Then-Uyën (TU) dram (KP has a Tai loan), labeled "enigmatic" (ATLC:188) but apparently reflecting an earlier *nram < *mrâm < *mlâm; Gelao has *ml-: Longjia mlàn¹/2 ~ Pudi mlàn¹/2 (both Aou), Qinglong (Hagei ḳaŋ², Wanzi (Gao) nàn¹, supporting the reconstruction of PAT-level *ʔumləm, indicated now also by Formosan as well as Japanese.

(30) T: ɔ³ ‘first singular’, from *uaw, with regular -ɔ < *-wa(a)w, as in kɔ 6 ‘scratch’, cf. Saek khvaw (A2), from an earlier *ʔu- a[ŋ]u < *ʔu-akā < PAT *(ʔu-,ʔi-)aku (see Benedict 1990b). This form, paralleling in AN the Central MP development, e.g., Niala (Ceram) ḳaw, provides the only evidence to date for the use of the *ʔu- marker for this pronoun in KD.


(32) ‘that’: ḳə³, matching Buyang ḳə⁴⁴, Publao ḳə⁴⁵; cf. PAN *- selectedIndex="0" /nə 3rd p. prn.’ (enclitic), supporting the reconstruction of *nə along with *nə at the PAT level, contra the suggested (in ATLC:406) *nə < *nə + i ya. However, *ʔnə. *ʔi-na is suggested by the probably “high” tone, in Laha mostly corresponding to PT *Al (see 5), and at this point can hardly be ruled out.
(33) 'flower': baal2 < *?baal2, from *q-baal (see 6) < *q-ba[ŋ]al (note KD parallels for medial *-ŋ- > Ø in ATLC:169); PAT *baŋal: P-Paiwan (Form.) vaŋal 'fruit' ~ 'flower'; Jp. hana, Old Jp. Fana 'flower'. Hlai: Jiamao ηa1 ηal 'flower', from *SYL + ηa (with VT), may also belong here, with parallels for *-a < *-al (see 4), along with P-Gelao *hnaŋ3 'flower', also from *SYL + ηa (regular *-aw < *-a), but final -n is anticipated here (analysis incomplete) and there is an alternative etymology for both the Hlai and Gelao forms, from PAT *(m)baŋaḥ (ATLC:294-5), which inter alia yielded Laqua, Pupeo puŋ, Pubiao puŋ22 'flower'.

(34) 'mouth': Laha mul1, BB mu01, TU mɔn, from PKD *(qa-)mul: Puiniao qəmen45, Pupeo kəmen, Laqua mɔn (Bonifacy 1905) ~ ka-mu (Laji); PAN *muŋut 'mouth'. Compare also *muŋmul > PMP *mul1mul ['mouth:te'] put into the mouth and suck' (Blust); note that the *qa- prefix here has 'shaped' the development: *qa-muŋut > *qa-mul[ut].


(36) 'deaf': ηal3, TU ŋan, BB kaŋan < PKD *ŋal: P-Gelao *ŋan4; cf. PMP *bəŋal 'deaf', from PAN-level *bəŋal. There are parallels for the indicated shift in AN from *bəŋal through assimilation to V1.

(37) 'yellow': Laha ni13, from PKD *(ʔ)ni1; Laqua nin < *niŋ (through assimilation); P-Gelao *ʔn14/6 < *ʔni14/6 through assimilation (for *-l > Ø, cf. 'flower'); Latvian hind (written an hi; cf. Gelao); also Saek niil (C1/B2) ['sthg. yellow] turmeric'; cf. Germ. Gelbwurz; also PMP *kuniŋ 'yellow'/*kuniŋ 'turmeric' ~ (Chamic) 'yellow', from PAN *kuli(ŋ)jaŋ (Siraya [Form.] kuli(aŋ) < PAT id. Without the nasal increment (ŋ) this root yielded PT *hljaŋ (Al) < *ʔljaŋ (through *u > /e/ destressing followed by VT), P-Hlai *(ʔ)yaŋ1/4. Without the /ŋ/, it yielded PMP *kuniŋ (regular *-l- > /n/; typical AN "drift towards disyllabism" [Blust]) as well as the above KD forms. With the ŋ it yielded PMP *kuniŋ (PMP lacks ŋ) and perhaps the above root through metathesis: *kuliŋjaŋ > *kuliŋ > *ʔliŋ > *(ʔ)niŋ (Saek length secondary). As anticipated, Japanese reflects SYL-l: ki < *kii < *ku[l]i[ŋ].
(38) 'die' ~ 'kill': Laha phên⁵ ~ phên², the only pair of this kind cited for Laha. Compare P-Gelao *plen¹ 'die': Gao (Wanzl) pen¹; Duoluo (Liuzhi) plan¹ ~ Kelao ple[n] (Bonifacx 1905) cites pleu, apparently a script misreading for *plen; Lati phi, Man P'ang piên, Ban Phung pê 'die', Laji phi⁵⁵ 'die', Lachi (unpublished word list by Nguyen Van Huy) pè 'die' ~ pê 'kill'; also Laqua and Pupeo tie, Pubiao tie⁵³ 'die'; also PT *praay (Al) (VT form, reflecting *[m]a-) 'die'; PKS *pray (Al) (without VT) 'die'; Lk. plei (Al) 'die'; Be dai¹ 'die' < *tay (Al). This etymon is apparently unrepresented in Hlai while Buyang piaŋ⁴² 'kill' looks like a "look-alike." These are the KD representatives of PAT *ma-play 'die' ~ *pa-play 'kill' > PAN *ma-Cay 'die' ~ *pa-Cay 'kill' ~ (especially MP) 'die' ~ 'end'; Jp. hate- 'end, die'; PMY *day⁵ 'die' ~ *tay⁵ 'kill'. The Laha/Gelao/Lati nasal-final (*-ên or the like) presents a problem; note that both Laha and Lachi have maintained the morphophonemic distinction between 'die' and 'kill'. Lachi pè 'die' ~ pê 'kill' supplies the vital clue here, the related Lati and Laji forms indicating that /pè/ reflects the simple root-final *-ay, whereas /pê/ reflects a nasal suffix of the *-ên type. Surely this is to be identified with the PAT/PAN *-ên goal- or object-focus marker, represented also in the KD forms for 'eat', from *(ma-)kai(-ên) (Benedict 1988:334-5). As such, it qualifies as a 'kill' marker; it would seem that with the loss of *ma- vs. *pa- through syllabic reduction, the *-ên suffix came into use to mark 'kill', followed by partial merging with 'die', with *ma- vs. *pa- making for the Laha tonal difference.

(39) 'steam rice': pu¹⁴ < PKD *(?)(m)pu¹; cf. White Tai bu⁴ (Al) 'incomplete cooking of rice (by steam), making it into a paste'; the most likely AN cognate is *b-: P-Phil. (Zorc) *buy buy 'cook wet rice'. Whatever the AT status, an early (Archaic) loan to Chinese is in evidence; cf. 粽 (GSR-438e) pijen/piuën 'steam rice' (Shijing cit.); for the final, cf. PTB *pur ~ *pir 'fly': 飛 (GSR-580a) pijer/pyjëi 'fly' ~ 飛 (GSR-471f) pijen/piuën 'soar, fly' (see STC:172 for the doublet, regularly < *-ur ~ *-ul).

(40) 'needle': bli², from *?blie < PAT *(?u-)m)balie via partial reduplication: *?bali[-balie]; Jp. hari < *bali[q] 'needle' (regular shifts).

On both the mainland and offshore, as iron replaced bone, the meaning also shifted via 'sthg. iron' to 'iron', as in the following:

(41) AN: Formosan (Atayal/Paiwanic) *(m)balieq (also 'nail')
(42) KD: \( \text{NT} \circ \text{mwa(A2)} < \circ \text{mbwa} \) (regular shift) < \( \circ \text{u-amba[liq]} \) (through VT)
SW/CT \( \circ \text{hle}k < \circ [\text{bal}i]q-\text{liq} \) (through VT and typical \( \circ \text{ia}k > \circ \text{-ek} \) leveling)
PKS \( \circ \text{khlet} \) (with \( \circ \text{-k} > \circ \text{-t} \) assimilation) (KD has \( \circ \text{-k} \) for \( \circ \text{-q} \), which is lacking)
Lakkia \( \text{khy} \text{ā}k < \circ \text{khly} \text{ā}k < \circ \text{m-khliak} \) (through VT, without leveling; typical Lk. secondary nasalization)

(43) Early loans:
Tib. \text{lca}gs < \( \circ \text{hlyak-s} \) (regular shift; \( \circ \text{-s} \) for loans)
 australia (GSR-1256b) \( \circ \text{xliat/tiet} \) (regular shifts; \( \circ \text{-k} > \circ \text{-t} \) assimilation)
PMY \( \circ \text{hli} \text{a} ? \) (regular \( \circ \text{-?} \) for \( \circ \text{-q} \) or \( \circ \text{-k} \), both lacking in PMY)

(44) Later loan:
Jinghpaw \( \text{phri} \text{\textdegree} \) (low tone) < \( \circ \text{phli} \) (Jg. lacks \( \circ \text{phl-} \)) < \( \circ \text{bli} \) (cf. Laha shift)
Note: Jg. has other, relatively early loans from KD, distinct from the obvious later loans from Tai (see Benedict, forthcoming)

(45) Parallel: P-Tibeto-Karen \( \circ (s-) k \text{ap 'needle'} \) (Wr. Tib. \text{khab}), P-Karen \( \circ \text{tha} ? < \circ \text{skap 'needle'} \rightarrow \text{iron} \) (see Benedict 1987, Table 5).

**APPENDIX**

**Abbreviations**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>AN</td>
<td>Austronesian</td>
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<td>Northern Tai</td>
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<td>Proto-Austronesian</td>
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<td>Ban Bung</td>
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<td>Proto-Austro-Tai</td>
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<td>(dialect of Laha)</td>
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<td>Proto-Kadai</td>
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<td>Miao-Yao</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>vocalic transfer</td>
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REFERENCES


