Tibeto-Burman "split cognates"

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The characteristic "split cognates" of Austro-Tai (ATLC:152) are the product of contrasting modes of canonical reduction [CR]: Miao-Yao on-the-right (CRR) vs. Kadai on-the-left (CRL):

\[
PAT\ *\text{mapra 'eye'} (> PAN\ *\text{maCa}) \\
CRL\ PKD\ *(m)\text{pra}\ A \\
\downarrow \\
p\text{ra (Saek)} \\
p\text{ya (Liuzhou)}
\]

\[
PMY\ *\text{may}\ C \\
\text{via } *\text{maya} \\
< *\text{mapya}
\]

Japanese regularly displays CRR: me 'eye', Old Japanese mê < *mai (Benedict 1990). The monosyllabic roots of Sino-Tibetan hardly lend themselves to "splitting" of this kind, however, even though the actual forms tend to be disyllabic through prefixation.\(^1\) This follows from the fact that the prefixes involved are weakly stressed, typically with schwa vocalism, hence can scarcely be expected to furnish a basis for a CRR "split" product of MY/Japanese style. It would appear that only a deviant ST language would behave in so unseemly a fashion and indeed this has proved to be the case.

Tujia is a TB language of some 770,000 speakers in west-central China (Hubel, Hunan, Sichuan, Guizhou), first reported (Hunan: Xiangxi dialect) in 1982 (Tian Desheng), with a later jianzhi on two other dialects ("Northern" and "Southern") by Tian, et al. (1986). It is a three-tone language that has undergone phonological erosion (vocalic and -n finals only) along with widespread relexification, the limited TB lexical correspondences pointing to a basic kinship with Burmese-Yipho. The CRR development is found in two forms (Xiangxi dialect) representing prefixed roots, with a contrast furnished by a third form from an unprefixed root:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;typical&quot; CRL shift</th>
<th>PTB</th>
<th>Tujia CRR shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'I' *ŋa &gt; /ŋa/</td>
<td>*ŋA</td>
<td>ᵃŋ³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'five' *a-ŋa &gt; /ŋa/</td>
<td>*-ŋA</td>
<td>on⁵⁵ &lt; *eŋ⁵⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'fish' *s-ŋa &gt; /ŋ(ŋ)⁴⁴</td>
<td>*(s-)ŋa³</td>
<td>son¹³ &lt; *ṣŋ³³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Still, one of the "bulgingly monosyllabic" reconstructions in STC (*tæwʌp #239 LUNGS) should actually be "split" into two separate etyma, *tsai 'lung' and *wʌp 'spongy'. See Matisoff 1978:113-23. [Ed.]
Prefixed *a- in TB 'five' appears to be later than either *r/l- or *b- (STC:31); note also (contra STC:fn.435) that prefixed *s- can now be reconstructed for this numeral in Proto-Chinese (see Benedict 1988:15); for the /13/ tone for 'fish', cf. the PST tone *B > *A shift after s- found in Chinese (STC:fn.494).

A parallel to the "split cognate" for "five", similarly created through (late)
*a- prefixation, is furnished by Dafla a1 'foot' <PTB *(s-)(g-)|la 'foot/leg" (cf. STC:fn.108/)

The Tujia /on/ and /son/ developments are weird by TB/ST standards but of conventional type for MY. The Tujia-speakers are scattered throughout the Miao homeland, hence substratal influences have perhaps played a role here.

REFERENCES


_____. 1975. Austro-T(h)i Language and Culture, with a glossary of roots. New Haven: HRAF Press. ("ATLC")


