Kiranti linking /ʔ/

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Van Driem (1990:84)\(^1\) has recently called attention to a linking /ʔ/ in Kiranti:

"In Limbu, compounds arose such as haʔluŋ 'fireplace stone', derived from ha 'tooth' and luŋ 'stone' with an unexplained linking glottal stop, not uncommon in compounds."

The /ʔ/ here, to be assigned morphemic status, surely is the residue of Proto-Tibeto-Burman *ʔa- = *ʔʔa-, basically a 3rd person pronominal element (Benedict 1972:121 ff.): 'tooth-its-stone'. Van Driem indicates that the /ʔ/ is variable ('not uncommon') here, paralleling PTB *ʔʔa-. The writer has frequently in Tibeto-Burman source material encountered an apparently random /ʔ/ that would appear to fit with the Limbu linking /ʔ/ and, indeed, one would anticipate parallelism in this line of development.

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REFERENCE


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\(^1\) Van Driem states that Kiranti appears to lack evidence for PTB *ʔy̍- vs. *ʔ-; yet he cites Thulung yem-/yep- 'stand up' < PTB *ʔy̍ yum, yo: 'salt' < PTB *ʔy̍ yum vs. rom 'body' < PTB *ʔwum [STEDT Etymon #1901—Ed.], pointing to P-Kiranti *ʔy̍- > Thulung y- vs. *ʔ- > Thulung r-.