

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 *a- = *ʔa-, 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 *ʔa-. 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.

REFERENCE

- Benedict, Paul K. 1972. *Sino-Tibetan: a Conspectus*. ["STC"]. Contributing editor, James A. Matisoff. Princeton-Cambridge Studies in Chinese Linguistics. Cambridge (U.K.): Cambridge University Press.
- Driem, Sjors van. 1990. "The fall and rise of the phoneme /r/ in Eastern Kiranti: sound change in Tibeto-Burman." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 53.1:83-88.

¹ Van Driem states that Kiranti appears to lack evidence for PTB *ry- vs. *r-; yet he cites Thulung *yem-/yep-* 'stand up' < PTB *g-ryap. yo: 'salt' < PTB *g-ryum vs. *reom* 'body' (< PTB *rwam [STEDT Etymon #1901—Ed.]), pointing to P-Kiranti *ry- > Thulung *y-* vs. *r- > Thulung *r-*.