

Sino-Tibetan kin term *-i suffix

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In an earlier paper (Benedict 1990:168, fn.5), the writer has presented evidence for a kin term *-i suffix at the Proto-Sino-Tibetan (PST) level. Further examination of the matter, with material drawn from his study of ST kinship terminology (Benedict 1941) has shown that this affix is represented in a number of ST kin term etyma, with cognates in a wide variety of ST languages. The following examples have been taken largely from the above-cited sources (generally with tones unmarked, as in the latter); final *-y forms are interpreted as < *-i; see also Benedict 1972 for semantic details and phonology.

*pa/ba 'father': Nungish *pai; Kaman (Miju) -pai; Karenni pe < *pay.

*ta 'grandfather' ~ 'father': PTB *ta:y; Kanauri te-te 'grandfather', te-go 'grandmother'; Limbu the-ba 'grandfather; grand-uncle; title of respect to an elderly man'; the-ba-sang (lit. 'grandfather-deity') 'a household deity to whom male animals are sacrificed, esp. cockerels'; Chang-Tangsa [N. Nagal] *ta:y 'grandfather'; Bodo-Garo *[t]ay[t]ay 'grandparent' (Dimasa daidai); *m-tay 'god/deity/spirit': Garo mite, Bodo, Dimasa mādai; Jingpho mādai 'a great nat to whom the chiefs offer' (for mā-, cf. mādō 'the nat of wisdom'); Burmese-Yipho: White Lolo, Black Lolo te 'grandmother'; Old Tibetan the < *tay 'the celestial gods of the Bon religion'; Archaic/Middle Chinese 帝 tieg/tiei- [< *ta:y, with departing sandhi tone for suffix; cf. Limbu -ba] 'sovereign, emperor, God' (GSR-877a).

*ma 'mother': Nungish *mai; Kaman (Miju) -mai 'woman; wife; daughter/girl', mai- 'grandmother'; Gyarong a-ma ~ mai (a rare doublet); West Himalayish *me < *may 'woman, female'; Written Tibetan (WT) bud-med 'woman; wife' (bu-d 'child'), from *me-d (cf. bu-smad ~ bu-mad 'children, in relation to their children') < *may; Luish (Kadu, Andro, Sengmai) a-me < *-may; Written Burmese (WB) (a-)mai 'mother' ('sister' in Tavoyan and Intha dialects); N. Loloish: Ahi (a-me < *may 'daughter'; Karenni me 'wife'; Chinese: Hakka dial. me < *may 'mother'.

*na 'woman/girl/female kin (grandmother/mother/older sister/daughter-in-law)': Middle Chinese 奶 na:i: 'a nurse; suckle, breast, milk'; (redupl.) respectful title for women'; Mand. nài-nai 'father's mother; respectful term for old woman'.

PTB *ya: W. Himalayish (Manchati, Kanashi, Chamba Lahuli) ya 'mother'; Tanish (Abor-Miri, Dafla) *yo < *ya 'grandmother' (but vocative for 'mother' in Pagri Miri); Kuki-Naga (Northern) *(a-)ya 'mother'; Chang-Tangsa: Tableng ya 'id.'; also Kanauri ya-s 'wife'; Kiranti: Rai me-ya 'id.'; WB

ma-ya: 'id.'; Digaro **mi-ya** 'woman', **ha-mi-ya** 'wife': PTB ***(y)ay** 'mother/grandmother/maternal aunt' (Matisoff 1985, 1992).

***(k-)wa** 'male (person)/husband/father': Kaman (Miju) **-wai** 'male; husband; son'; W. Himalayish: Almora subgroup ***khwe** < ***k-way** 'grandson'; Karen ***wai** 'older sibling' < 'older brother'; Sgaw **(ta-)khwa** < ***k-wa** 'cousin', through extension; **khwe** < ***k-way** 'relatives of cousins'; Karenni **we** < ***way** 'husband'.

***mow** 'woman/female/daughter-in-law/sister-in-law': Jingpho **moi** < ***mo[w]-i** 'father's sister'; Archaic/Middle Chinese 妹 **mwəd/muâi-** 'younger sister' (GSR 531k), from ***moi-**, with departing sandhi tone for suffix.

The writer (1990) has pointed out the striking parallel furnished by this suffix to the widespread Austro-Tai ***-i** suffix with kinship terms, to be equated with the ***i** marker in that stock for 'female; small'.¹ Areal influences can be seen at work here, along with a universal regarding ***i** as a diminutive. Matisoff (1994) has suggested a derivation of the PST ***-i** from ***za** 'child' via ***y(a)**. This cannot conclusively be ruled out but a PST level must be assigned, in any event, inasmuch as the item clearly remained productive in the Sinitic branch of the stock, as shown by the fact that all three roots represented by ***-i** suffix forms in Chinese appear also without the suffix: 祖 **tso/tsuo:** 'grandfather, ancestor' (GSR-46b), from ***sto:** < ***s-ta** (cf. WT **s-ma-d**, cited above under ***ma** 'mother', with a parallel WT **s-pa-d** < ***pa** 'father'); 女 **njō/hjwo:** 'woman, lady, girl' (GSR-94a), from ***na;** 母 **məg/məw:** 'mother' (GSR-947a), from ***mow**, all exhibiting regular phonological correspondences (Benedict 1992).

¹ Hakka has an unsuffixed /pa/ for 'father' but, curiously, the Hakka dialect spoken by the She (deviant Hmong-Mien group) in southern Zhejiang (Akifumi Yahanashi, "Notes on the Study of the Hakka dialect spoken by the She minority in southern Zhejiang," ICSTLL 26, Osaka, 1993) has **mə** 'mother' but **pai** 'father'. Problem: what is the source of this -i? It appears to provide evidence for the continuing productivity of this suffix either in Chinese dialects, specifically here the Hakka group, or in Hmong-Mien, specifically here in the highly deviant She (Ho-nte), yet the much needed parallels appear to be lacking.

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