THE PRESENT STATE OF PST/PTB RECONSTRUCTION: CAN WE EVEN WRITE A FABLE IN PROTO-LOLO-BURMESE?*

James A. Matisoff
University of California, Berkeley

How much can we really recover from the past history of languages? What do we mean when we claim to have "reconstructed a proto-language"?

In sober moments, all historical linguists have to admit that a "proto-language" is at best only a pale reflection of a real living language. Often all that can be salvaged is the proto-phonemic system, along with a collection of mostly unrelated individual lexical items. If we are lucky, and work in a family with anciently attested texts in several languages, we can also achieve some understanding of the proto-grammar, especially if the languages are rich in morphology. In these respects, Indo-Europeanists have been much better off than Sino-Tibetanists, to the point where the 19th century scholar August Schleicher once dared to compose a fable in Proto-Indo-European.[1]

It would certainly be an act of aggravated *chutzpah* to undertake a similar enterprise for Proto-Sino-Tibetan, or even for Proto-Tibeto-Burman. But what about trying to compose a text in a younger proto-language, let us say the one for which the most detailed historical reconstruction has been accomplished, i.e. Proto-Lolo-Burmese (PLB), spoken only about 2000 years ago?[2]

Thinking this might be worth a try, I have chosen a Lahu fable recorded during my first fieldtrip to Chiangmai Province, Thailand, in 1965-66,[3] a simple text of nine sentences containing about 60 different words. As a first approximation, I have "translated" the text into PLB morpheme by morpheme, as if the proto-language had exactly the same word order, construction types, and repertory of particles as modern Black Lahu. Most of these morphemes have already been reconstructed at the PLB level; several others are here

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[1] See Schleicher 1868. This text was "updated" more than a century later by W. Lehmann (1981).

[2] Also known as Burmese-Lolo, Yi-Burmese, Burmese-Yipho, etc.

[3] I believe this fable may ultimately be traced back to Aesop. It had undoubtedly been transmitted to my group of Lahu by Christian missionaries.

etymologized for the first time; only a few remain etymologically obscure at the moment.

The end result is a text with reliably reconstructed (even if largely unpronounceable) morphemes, but with a grammatical structure that might be more accurately termed "pre-Lahu" rather than PLB. In order to attempt a serious syntactic reconstruction, the grammars of modern Loloish and Burmish languages would have to be systematically compared with what is known about Old Burmese grammar, a project which seems vastly premature at the present stage of research. An especially serious problem is posed by the rich systems of grammatical particles or functors displayed by all LB languages: although these correspond well conceptually from language to language, it is relatively rare to find cognate etyma filling the same conceptual slots across languages. Functors have developed from root morphemes by "grammaticalization", but this process seems to have operated independently in each language, so that it is impossible to figure out which was the "original" morpheme used for each grammatical function.

This said, it is still instructive to reconstruct what we can -- even if all we come up with is a string of putative PLB lexical items arranged according to modern Black Lahu grammar.

This paper is organized as follows. First comes the verbatim modern Lahu text, with interlinear glosses and a form-class designation[4] provided for each morpheme on its first occurrence (§1), followed by a free English translation (§2). Then the vocabulary of the text is roughly arranged by part of speech, and as far as possible each morpheme is etymologized at the PLB level (§3), with special attention paid to new etymologies and words which remain obscure. These reconstructed morphemes are then strung together in modern Lahu word order to create a running text (§4). Finally, we point out the phonological and grammatical puzzles that remain for anyone who might wish to travel further along this road (§§5-6).

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[4] A list of the abbreviations used for these form-classes is given at the end of the paper.

1.0   LAHU TEXT

dà-qhu	*phê*	*pí*	*ve*	*ğâʔ-phu-qā*	*lɛ*	*á-cὲ*
boast	release	able	GEN	cock	and	hawk

The Boastful Cock and the Hawk

1.
tê	pɔ̂ʔ	thâ,	kho	tê	kho	ɔ̀-qhɔ	lo	ğâʔ	tê	mɔ̄
one	time	TEMP	coop	one	(coop)	inside	LOC	chicken	one	(flock)
Num	Clf	Puniv	N	Num	Clf	Nspat	Pn	N		Num	Clf

cɔ̀	ve	yɔ̀.
be there	NOM	AFF
V	Puniv	Puf

2.
ğâʔ	ô-ve	tê	mɔ̄	ɔ̀-qhɔ	lo	ɔ̀-phu-qā		nî	khɛ	cɔ̀
	that					male (bird, etc.)		two	(animal)	
	DET					N		Num	Clf	

ve	yɔ̀.

3.
ğâʔ-phu-qā	tê	khɛ	lὲ	yɔ̂	tê	ni	le-le	kù		ve
			TOPIC	3p		day	every	crow/call		REL
			Punf	Npron		Clf	Bn	V		Puniv

tê	yân	thâ,	kho	ɔ̀-qhô	lo	tí		tâʔ	kù	ve	cê.
	(time)			above		only		climb			QUOT
	Clf			Nspat		Puniv		V			Puf

4.
yɔ̂	kù	ve	ɔ̀-khɔ̂		lὲ	chi	qhe	qôʔ	ve	yɔ̀:
			word(s)			this	like	say		
			N			DET	Next	V		

5.
ŋà	qhô	lὲ	ꞷ	-šɛ̄	-mu	-šɛ̄-phâ	mâ	cɔ̀.
1p	above		great		high	AGT-NOM		NEG
Npron	Mpfx		Vadj	Mpfx	Vadj	Mpfx/Pv		Adv

6.
qha-pɔ̀-ὲ	thàʔ		ğâ	-šɛ̄-phâ	ŋà	yɔ̀,"	tê
all	ACC		win/beat	AGT-NOM			thus
Next	Pn		V	Mpfx/Pv			Pquot

tí	chi	qhe	kù	chê	ve	yɔ̀.
				PROG[5]		
				Vv		

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[5] This word means 'to be in a place; stay; dwell' as a main verb. See JAM 1991:415-8.

7. mâ   ğâ   ve   ğâʔ   tê   khɛ   lè   tê   ni   le-le   yɔ̂

    tɔ̂-khɔ̂   chi   thàʔ   ğa   kâ   ve   thàʔ   pa-tɔ,   ɔ̀-pɨ̄-tâʔ
    words/speech   get to   hear   CAUS   thicket
    N   vV   V   Pn   N

    lo   tɨ́   ca   vàʔ   tā   ve   yò.
                    go and[6]   hide   DUR
                    vV   V   Pv

8. tê   ni   qhe   ğâʔ-phu-qā   chi   yɔ̂   kho ɔ̀-qhô lo   qɔ̀ʔ
                                                                                again/back
                                                                                vV

    tâʔ   e   lɛ,   qɔ̀ʔ   bù   chê   ve   tê   yân   thâ,
            ABL/away   SUSP   Punf   cry (animal)
            Pv   Punf   V

    "ŋà   qhô   ğâ   -pā   mâ   cɔ̀",   tè   kù   chê   ve
                            AGT-NOM

    ɔ̀-qhɔ   lo,   á-cè   tê   khɛ   là   lɛ,   yɔ̂   thàʔ   chèʔ
    within/during   hawk   come   bite
    Nspat   N   V   V

    chî   qay   ve   yò.
    lift   away
    V   Vv

9. tê   ni   le-le   ɔ̀-pɨ̄-tâʔ   lo   vàʔ   chê   tā   ve   ğâʔ   tê

    khɛ   qɔ̀ʔ   tɔ̂ʔ   la   lɛ,   ğâʔ   ô-ve   tê   mō ɔ̀-qhô thàʔ
                    emerge   CIS[7]
                    V   Pv

    qɔ̀ʔ   kwân   tā   ve   yò.
            rule
            V

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[6] This word means 'look for; search' as a main verb.

[7] This verbal particle expressing 'cisative motion' or 'motion toward the center of deictic interest' is a derivative of the full verb **là** 'come'.

II. FREE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

1. Once upon a time in a certain coop there was a flock of chickens.
2. Among this flock of chickens there were two cocks.
3. As for one of these cocks, every day when he would crow, he would always climb up on top of the coop to crow.
4. The words he would crow were like this:
5. "Above me there is no one greater and no one higher.
6. The one who beats everybody else is me!" This is how he would crow.
7. As for the cock who couldn't compete, since he would hear these words day after day, he would always go and hide himself in a big thicket.
8. One day when the cock had climbed again onto the top of the coop, and was screeching as usual, "There is nobody who can beat me!", just as he was crowing, a hawk came and bit into him and lifted him up and away.
9. The other cock, the one who used to be hiding in the big thicket every day, came out again, and from then on he ruled over that flock of chickens.

III.   VOCABULARY

(A)   Nominals

Common nouns

Lahu	*PLB*	*References*	*Gloss*
dà-qhu	*nda¹-kwa¹	NEW ✓	'bragging; foolishness'

/This word (also pronounced **dà-qho**) seems cognate to or borrowed from the Chinese compound 夸 大 Mand. **kuǎdà**) 'exaggerate, overstate', with the order of syllables reversed. The morpheme 夸 is reconstructed as OC **k'wå** in GSR #43a. Lahu -u is the regular reflex of earlier *-wa (cf. 'cattle' PLB *nwa² > Lh. **nû**; 'handspan' PLB *twa¹ > Lh. **thu**; 'tooth' PLB *swa² > Lh. -šū 'toothlike part of tools')./[8]

| kho | *kram¹ | DL 373 | 'coop; fenced-off enclosure; garden' |

/This morpheme also functions as a classifier; see below./

| ɡâʔ | *k-rak^H | TSR #184 | 'chicken; fowl' |

| ɔ-qhɔ | *ʔǎŋ-kəw¹ | NEW ✓ | 'inside part' *(spatial)*; 'while, during' *(temporal)* |

/Cf. Maru a³¹khuk³¹ (the development *-əw > Maru -uk is regular)./

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[8] The second syllable of WB **wa-krwâ** 'boast' also resembles Lahu -qhu, though the initial and tonal correspondences are wrong: WB **krwâ** < PLB *grwa²; Lh. **qhu** < PLB *kwa¹.

ɔ̀-mō   cf. **mō** (Clf)   'group'

ɔ̀-phu-qā   ***ʔăŋ-pu¹-ʔga²**   DL 235, 895   'male (of certain birds and animals)'

/**phu** is perhaps a loan < Tai (cf. Si. **phûu, tua-phûu**); the last syllable (which occurs in several other animal names) prob. derives from the verb **qā** 'mute, dumb; stupid' (cf. WB **ʔâ**)./

ğâʔ-phu-qā ***k-rak^H-pu¹-ʔga²**   'cock; rooster'

ɔ̀-qhô   ***ʔăŋ-kaw²** (?)   NEW ✓   'top part; part above; part over'

/The Lahu rhyme **-o** is also consistent with the reconstruction ***ʔăŋ-kam²**; but for the moment ***-aw** seems preferable, since it is parallel to the reconstructions of several other Lahu demonstrative and locative morphemes in ***-aw**. Cf. the determiner **ô ve**, below./

(ɔ̀-)khɔ̂   ***(ʔăŋ-)kraŋ²**   NEW ✓   'word; noise; sound; speech; voice; language'

/Although there is a similar Tai etymon represented by Shan **khɔɔ** (DL 380), this now seems to be a genuine TB root. Cf. Zhangzhung **glang ~ klang** (JAM 2001: #30)./

ɔ̀-šɛ̄-phâ   ***ʔăŋ-sin²-pa²**   NEW ✓   'body; owner'

/Cf. DL 1215; see "Particles" below./

ɨ-šɛ̄-mu-šɛ̄-phâ ***ʔəy²-sin²-mraŋ³-sin²-pa²**   'a great personage'
                                                ("one who is great and high")

/This is an "extended elaborate expression"; see parts below./

tɔ̂-khɔ̂   ***daŋ²-kraŋ²**   DL 653   'words; speech'

ɔ̀-pɨ-tâʔ   ***ʔăŋ-ʔbəy²-ʔtak^H**   NEW ✓   'thicket'

/This noun is derived from the verb **pɨ-tâʔ** 'be messy, disordered, cluttered' (DL 870); more support is necessary for this etymology./

á-cè   ***ʔăk-dz(y)wan¹**   DL 84   'hawk; kite; bird of prey'

Pronouns
yɔ̂   ***zaŋ²**   DL 1290   '3rd person'

ŋà   ***ŋa¹**   DL 424   '1st person'

Numerals
tê   ***dan² / *day²**   DL 625;   'one; a, an'

/See also JAM 1995a; 1995b, §3.14./

| nî | *ni² ✕ *s-ni-t | TSR #160 | 'two' |

Classifiers

pɔ̂ʔ	*ʔpok^H	TSR #60	'for times'
kho	*kram¹	DL 373	'for coops'
mɔ̄	LOAN < Tai	DL 1011	'for groups, flocks'

/PTai *hmuu > Si. mùu, Shan muu; cf. Li Fang Kuei 1977 (HCT):75-6./

| khɛ | *kriŋ¹ | DL 376 | 'for animals' |

/Same morpheme as khɛ (N) 'string, rope'; cf. Si. chŷak 'rope; classifier for domesticated elephants'./

| ni | *ʔnəy¹ | DL 758 | 'for days' |
| yâ(n) | LOAN < Tai | DL 1260 | 'for times, occasions' |

/PTai *jaam 'a watch in the night' > Cf. Si. jaam, Lao ñaam, Shan jam; cf. Li 1977:178-9./

Determiners [9]

| ô ve | *ʔaw²-way³ | NEW ✓ | 'that' |

/Cf. "Pal. suff." (pp. 82-4), contra Benedict 1983./

| le-le | *lay³-lay³ | DL 1373-4 | 'each; every' (always after tê + Clf) |

/Probably ✕ le 'substance-question particle'; see "Pal. suff." #21./

| chi | *tsi¹ | NEW ✓ | 'this' |

/See DL 520ff. Many cognates are to be found in ZMYYC #981, including: Xide tshη⁴⁴, Dafang tshɔ, Mile tɕi³³, Naxi Lijiang tʂhɯ³³, Naxi Yongning tʂhη³³, Hani Dazhai ɕi⁵⁵, Jinuo ɕi³³, Zaiwa xji⁵¹, Langsu tʃhe³¹; an extra-LB cognate is Bokar Adi ɕi:./

| qhe | *ka-y¹ | "Pal.suff."#23 | 'like, as; topicalizer' |

/Possibly related via metathesis are Bola (Burmish) tʃhɔ̌⁵⁵khja³¹ 'like this', thɔ̌i⁵⁵khja³¹ 'like that', perhaps < *kya; cf. Dai and Huang 1992 ("TBL"): #'s 946, 952./

| qha-pɔ̀-è | *ka¹-bun¹-ʔay³ NEW ✓ | | 'all; completely; everything, everybody' |

/< pɔ̀ 'finish, be complete' (see Verbs, below)./

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[9] For the purposes of this paper, I am grouping together under the rubric of "Determiner" morphemes which are analyzed more precisely in JAM 1973/1982.

(B)   Verbs (including adjectival verbs)

phê   **pyiŋ²* ≍ **priŋ¹* NEW ✓   'release; send forth'

/Cf. WB **phyâñ** 'with irregular, violent starts of heat', **phrañ** 'untie, unloose, unfold'; this is a distinct root from ***prəy¹** 'untie' > WB **phre**, Lahu **phɨ**./

cɔ̀   **džaŋ¹*   DL 492-4   'be there; have'

/Not only is this etymon well-attested in Loloish, but it is now established for TB as a whole./[10]

tâʔ   **ʔtak^H*   TSR #98   'climb up; go up; ascend'

kù   **graw¹* (?)   LOAN? cf. DL 337 'call out; cry out'

/The reconstruction of this etymon presents several problems. It must first of all be distinguished from a similar PLB root ***kaw¹** 'call, summon' > WB **khaw**, Lahu **qho** (DL 293). Lahu **kù** has a front velar, which reflects a cluster with ***-r-**, making the comparison with WB **kraw** 'shout, call out' attractive (< ***graw¹**), though the usual Lahu reflex of ***-aw** is **-o**, not **-u**. It is possible that the Lahu form is a loan from Tai (cf. Si. **kùu** 'halloo, shout, call out, esp. when hunting'./

ɨ   **ʔəy²*   NEW ✓   'be big; be great'

mu   **mraŋ³*   DL 991   'be high'

pɔ̀   **bun¹* (?)   DL 872; GSTC #164 'finish; come to an end'

/This word also presents complicated etymological problems, since several different but resemblant roots must be considered. There is evidence for a final nasal, e.g. Phunoi **pɔ́n**, Bisu **pɤ́n** (cited by Bradley 1979, who reconstructs both ***bran** (#749) and ***ban** (#793). Several other nasal-final forms are offered in TBL #1702: Zaiwa **pan⁵¹**, Langsu (Maru) **pəŋ³¹**, Bola **pɛ̃³⁵**, Leqi **paːn**. GSTC #164 reconstructs ***bwǎy** on the basis of WB **pwâi** 'be past the season (as of fruit)', Jingpho **bōi** 'be finished', etc. Still other WB forms (**prî** 'be done', **pri** 'perfective particle') point rather to PLB ***bri¹/².**/

ǧâ   **k-ra²*   DL 1116   'win; overcome; beat someone out'

chê   **tsay²*   DL 542   'live, dwell, stay; progressive auxiliary'

/≍ **jê** 'stop, cease, come to rest' < ***N-dzay²** (see DL 574, GSTC #156); there is an attractive comparison with Chinese: 在   OC ***dz'əg** (GSR 943i), Mand.

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[10] (Loloish) Lisu **jaw⁴**, Phunoi **cã**, Bisu **tšá**, Akha **jó**, Mpi **tɕa³** [Bradley 1979:#610]; also Yi Xide **dzo³³**, Naxi Lijiang **dzy³³**, Caiyuan Hani **tsa³³**, Jinuo **tʃa³¹**, etc. [ZMYYC #735]; (Baic) Dali **tsɯ³³**, Jianchuan **tsɯ³³**, Bijiang **dʑi³³**; (Qiangic) Ergong **ntɕho**, Muya **ndʑø³⁵**, Guiqiong **jɛ̃⁵⁵**, Ersu **dʒo⁵⁵**, Shixing **dʐɑ̃⁵³**, etc. < PTB ***N-džaŋ**.

zài. Bradley (1979:#598A) reconstructs ***cya²** ⋈ ***jya²**, on the basis of Lisu tya¹, Phunoi **ca**./

ğa	*ra³	DL 1113	'get, obtain; manage to V; must V; be able to V'[11]

qô?	*?kapᴴ	NEW ✓	'say'

/Confirmatory evidence needed./

kâ	*gra²	DL 324	'hear'

ca	*?gya¹ ⋈ *?ra¹ NEW ✓		'look for, seek; go and V'

/ca seems to be cognate to WB **hra** 'search; look for', though the initial correspondence is unusual (see DL p. 432). The WB form is from PLB ***?ra¹**, while the Lahu could be from ***?gya¹**. Either proto-variation could be posited, or else an unusual cluster could be invoked *ad hoc*, e.g. ***?grya¹**./

và?	*wakᴸ	TSR #178	'hide' (v.i.)

/⋈ **fá** 'hide' (v.t.) < PLB ***?wak**/

qɔ̂?	*gokᴸ	TSR #2; DL 255-9	'crooked, bent; return, go back'

bù	*mbu¹	NEW ✓	'make a loud noise (esp. of animals); crow, bellow, moo, neigh...'

/Many Loloish cognates are to be found in ZMYYC #784, including: Dafang **mbu²¹**, Nanhua **bɯ³³**, Mile **pu³³**, Mojiang **bu⁵⁵**, Lisu **bu³³**./

là	*la¹	GSTC #185;	'come'

/⋈ ***lay**; see "Pal. suff." #5./

chè?	*C-tsatᴸ	TSR #24; DL 537	'bite into'

chî	*kyi²	DL 526	'lift up; raise'

tɔ̂?	*?twakᴴ	TSR #102	'emerge; come out; go out'

qay	*?ga-y¹	DL 260	'go'; *(as auxiliary)* 'motion away from'

/This verb has a fused palatal suffix; ⋈ **gà** 'arrive, reach' < ***m-ga¹**; see "Pal. suff." #4./

kwân	LOAN	DL 360	'rule over; control'

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[11] This word means 'get; obtain' as a main verb, and 'able to V' as a post-head versatile verb (in a manner very similar to the syntax and semantics of Thai **dâj**). In this text it is functioning as a pre-head versatile verb. See JAM 1991:418-22, where similar grammaticalizations in other languages are discussed.

/Prob. ult. < Chinese 管 'be in charge', OC **kwân** (GSR #157h), Mand. **guǎn**). The tone is ⁵³ in Yunnanese Mandarin, practically identical to the contour of Lahu tone /ˆ/.

(C) Particles

lɛ   ***ʔlya¹ ??**   DL 1386-8   'and; conjunctive particle'

/Cf. the similar Siamese word **lɛ́ʔ**; this is the same etymon as the suspensive particle (below)./

thâ   ***ta²¹²**   DL 673   'temporal'

lo   ***lam³**   DL 1377   'locative'[13]

ve   ***way³**   [Etym] GSTC;   'general nominalizer;
                    [Gmr] JAM 1972b   subordinator'

mâ   ***ma²**   DL 968   'negative'

yò   ***yam¹**   NEW ✓   'declarative; affirmative'; *(as interjection)* 'yes'

/Sometimes pronounced **yà-ò** in slangy speech (originally a Yellow Lahu form);[14] perhaps cognate with Geman and Darang Deng **am⁵³** 'copular' (ZMYYC #733)./

lè   ***lya¹**   NEW ✓   'topicalizer'

tí   ***ʔdik^L**   TSR #49; DL 604 'only'

/≍ **tê** 'one'/

tè   ***day¹**   DL 646-7   'quotation ender'

/Prob. ≍ **tè** (V) 'be true'; similar to Si. **thɛ́ɛ** 'real, genuine', but more likely cognate to WB **tai** 'very; intensifier'./

cê   ***džay²**   GSTC #104   'quotative'

šɛ-phâ ***sin²-pa²**   NEW ✓   'agentive nominalizer; one who V's'

/See 'body; owner' (N), above; ≍ WB **sañ** 'owner, proprietor < PLB Tone *1. Undoubtedly cognate is Lai Chin **sin** 'possessive particle'.[15] An excellent Chinese comparandum is 身 'body, person' OC **śiĕn** (GSR 386a-c), Mand. **shēn**./

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12 An allofam with PLB Tone *1 is reflected by Lisu (Fraser) **htá⁴**.

13 Grammaticalized from PLB ***lam²** 'road'. See JAM 1991:389-90. A recently discovered cognate is Sgaw Karen **lə** (Tone A1) 'locative particle'.

14 Amusingly this is homophonous with the Icelandic word for 'yes', written **já** but pronounced [jaʊ].

15 Data from Kenneth VanBik.

pā   *ʔba²   NEW ✓   'agentive nominalizer'

/Cf. DL 811./

thà?   *C-tak^L   TSR #42   'upper part, top surface' (N);
                                  accusative, particle' (Pn)

/Cf. JAM 1991:388-9./

pa-tɔ   *ban³-ʔdon¹ LOAN   'because; due to the fact that'

/The first syllable is sometimes written with a final **-n** in missionary orthography ("**pantaw**"), suggesting it is a loanword. See DL 804./

tā   *ʔda²   DL 596-7   'durative'

/Grammaticalized from the full verb **tā** 'place; put; set down'./

lɛ   *ʔlya¹ ??   DL 1386-7   'suspensive'

/Occurs after verbs in non-final clauses; same etymon as the homophonous conjunctive particle that occurs between nouns (see above)./

e   *ʔay³   GSTC #128   'motion away from; transitive motion'

/Cf. also DL 118; "Pal. suff." #1 (pp. 45-6)./

la   *ʔla¹ or *la³ NEW ✓   'motion toward; cisative motion'

/Cf. DL 1343./

The above etymologies certainly differ among themselves in quality, ranging from the certain, to the merely probable, to the quite speculative. Still it seems safe to say that large numbers of modern Lahu words -- perhaps the majority of the core lexicon -- can be provided with reasonably good PLB etymologies.

The real difficulty in writing a fable in PLB goes far beyond the etymologies of individual words.

IV.   MORPHEME BY MORPHEME TRANSLATION INTO PROTO-LOLO-BURMESE

nda¹-kwa¹ priŋ² C-prek^L way³ kərak^H-pu(w)¹-ʔga² ʔlya¹ ʔăk-dz(y)wan¹

1. dan² ʔpok^H ta², kram¹ dan² kram¹ ʔăŋ-kaŋ¹ lam³ kərak^H dan² ʔmu² džaŋ¹ way³ yam¹.

2. kərak^H ʔaw²-way³ dan² ʔmu ʔăŋ-kaŋ¹ lam³ , ʔăŋ-pu¹-ʔga² ni² kriŋ¹ džaŋ¹ way³ yam¹.

3. kərak^H-pu¹-ʔga² dan² kriŋ¹ lya¹, zaŋ² dan² ʔnəy¹ lay³-lay³   graw¹ way³ dan² yam² ta², kram¹ ʔăŋ-kaw² lam³ ʔdik^L ʔtak^H graw¹ way³ džay².

4. zaŋ² graw¹ way³ ʔăŋ-kraŋ² lya¹, tsi¹ ka-y¹ ʔkap^H way³ yam¹:

5. "ŋa¹ kaw² lya¹, ʔəy²-sin²-mraŋ³-sin²-pa² ma² džaŋ¹.

6. ka¹-bun¹-ʔay³ C-tak^L ra² sin² - pa² ŋa¹ yam¹," day¹ ʔdik^L tsi¹   ka-y¹ graw¹ tsay² way³ yam¹.

7. ma² ra² way³ kərak^H dan² kriŋ¹ lya¹, dan² ʔnəy¹ lay³-lay³ zaŋ² daŋ² -kraŋ² tsi¹ C-tak^L ra³ gra² way³ C-tak^L ban³ - ʔdon¹,   ʔăŋ-ʔbəy²-ʔtak^H lam³ ʔdik^L ʔgya¹ wak^L ʔda² way³ yam¹.

8. dan² ʔnəy¹ ka-y¹ kərak^H-pu¹-ʔga² tsi¹ zaŋ² kram¹ ʔăŋ - kaw² lam³ gok^L ʔtak^H ʔay³ ʔlya¹, gok^L mbu¹ tsay² way³ dan² yam² ta², "ŋa¹ kaw² ra² ʔba² ma² džaŋ¹," day¹ graw¹ tsay² way³   ʔăŋ - kaŋ¹ lam³, ʔăk-dz(y)wan¹ dan² kriŋ¹ la¹ ʔlya¹, zaŋ² C-tak^L Č-tsat^L kyi² ka¹-ʔay way³ yam¹.

9. dan² ʔnəy¹ lay³-lay³ ʔăŋ-ʔbəy²-ʔtak^H lam³ wak^L tsay² way³ kərak^H
dan² kriŋ¹ gok^L ʔ-twak^H ʔla¹ ʔlya¹, kərak^H ʔaw² - way³ dan² ʔmu
ʔăŋ-kaw² C-tak^L gok^L gwan²¹⁶ ʔda² way³ yam¹.

V. PHONETIC PUZZLES

If we try to read the above text aloud, we are immediately faced with severe problems. How can we be sure we our pronouncing the etyma with a good Proto-Lolo-Burmese accent?

While the basic tonal categories of PLB are clear, the phonetics of the proto-tones must forever remain obscure. Whether the two basic tones in non-stopped syllables differed most saliently in pitch or phonation type cannot now be determined, though several scholars have speculated that Tone *1 had clear or modal phonation, while Tone *2 was characterized by breathy voice. As far as relative pitch goes, the modern languages are not much help, since they are about equally divided as to whether the reflexes of *1 are higher or lower than those of *2. Tone *3, while it must be reconstructed at the PLB level, is much rarer lexically than *1 or *2, occurs on many functors, and participates in numerous morphological alternations, leading all observers to conclude that it is historically younger. It seems to have been associated particularly with glottalization or "creaky" phonation. In stopped syllables a two-way tonal opposition must be reconstructed for Proto- Loloish, HIGH vs. LOW, which we may interpret as basically a pitch difference.[17]

Another puzzle is the exact nature of the phonetic difference between the PLB *preglottalized voiced (e.g. *ʔb-) vs. *preglottalized voiceless (e.g. *ʔp-) obstruents that must be set up for tonal reasons. Perhaps the *voiced series was imploded (but against this interpretation is the fact that it includes a palatal and a velar member as well as a labial and a dental). The *voiceless series may well have been pronounced sesquisyllabically, with a schwa after the glottal element.

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[16] Since this appears to be a Chinese loanword, we should substitute the native phrase jɔ̂-mɔ̂ phὲʔ, lit. "be a master", reconstructible as *ndzəw²-maŋ² C-prek^L. The morpheme jɔ̂- < *ndzəw² 'lord, master' has many cognates, including WB cûi, Nasu dz'ɿ³³mo³³, Luquan nts'y³³, and Xixia *ndzɯ (see DL 578). The 2nd syllable -mɔ̂ means 'old, senior' (cf. WB mâŋ 'ruler, official'; DL 1031).

[17] See JAM 1972, *passim* (TSR). This pitch difference was evidently redundant at the PLB stage (it is not manifested in Written Burmese), but for phonetic verisimilitude in our reconstructed text we have marked stopped syllables as either HIGH (^H) or LOW (^L).

VI. MORPHOSYNTACTIC ASSUMPTIONS

We have been assuming that the word order of PLB was identical to that of modern Lahu. This is certainly a debatable proposition, but perhaps we can be fairly confident that the core of LB syntax was Lahu-like in the following respects:

- PLB must have had verb-final clause structure, with concomitant use of postpositions rather than prepositions.

- The order of the pre-verbal NP's in the PLB clause must have been relatively free.

- The order of the morphemes in quantified NP's was probably Nqh + Num + Clf, with the quantified head coming first, followed by the Numeral plus Classifier.

- PLB relative clauses were externally headed, and must usually have preceded the head-noun they modified.

- Grammaticalization of root nouns and verbs to postpositions must already have been well underway at the PLB stage.

- The bleaching of full verbs to auxiliaries ("versatile verbs") had probably already begun, so that "verb concatenation" (largely unmediated by particles) must have been the most frequent strategy for creating complex verbal notions.

- Several semantically differentiated clause-nominalizers (agentive, locative, temporal) must already have been in use, with the most general one (like Lahu **ve**) frequently serving to nominalize or "reify" whole sentences.

- On the negative side, there is absolutely no evidence that PLB manifested "verb pronominalization", i.e. affixal agreement marking of subject and/or object in the VP, as e.g. in the Kiranti group of E. Nepal.[18]

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[18] On the other hand, PLB may well have had auxiliary verbs or particles in the VP that indirectly marked the "direction of benefaction" of the verbal event, like Lahu **lâ** 'non-3rd person beneficiary' (< **là** 'come') and **pî** '3rd person beneficiary' (< **pî** 'give'). See JAM 1973/1982 (GL), pp. 324-330.

- On the morphophonemic plane, the large number of functors (determiners and particles) that are reconstructible with PLB Tone *3, *preglottalized initials, and/or final *palatal semivowel suggests that these phonological features were exploited at an early date for abstract grammatical duty.[19]

In order to validate and nuance all these impressions, there will be no substitute for serious comparative grammatical studies of the modern Lolo-Burmese languages. Research into the historical syntax of TB is still in its infancy, and it is high time for it to grow up!

Meanwhile, we historical linguists might well profit from the moral of this fable itself. Let us not at this stage be too confident about what we can recover from the distant history of our language families, lest some cosmic bird of prey come swooping down to punish us for our grandiosity!

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[19] Cf. the reconstructions of the following Lahu functors in the list of reconstructed vocabulary (§3, above): **ve, le-le, e, lɛ, lo, pā, pa-tɔ, la, tɛ̀, qhe, cê**.

ABBREVIATIONS

Form-classes[20]

ABL	ablative	Pn	noun particle
ACC	accusative	Pquot	quotative particle
Adv	adverb	Prt	particle
AGT-NOM	agentive nominalizer	Puf	final unrestricted particle
CAUS	causative	Punf	nonfinal unrestricted prt
CIS	cisative motion	Puniv	universal unrestricted prt
Clf	classifier	Pv	verb particle
DET	determiner	PROG	progressive
LOC	locative	SUSP	suspensive
Mpfx	prefixable morpheme	TEMP	temporal
Next	extentive noun	TOP	topic
Npron	pronoun	Vadj	adjectival verb
Nspat	spatial noun	Vv	posthead versatile verb
Num	numeral	vV	prehead versatile verb

Works cited

DL	JAM 1988	Pal. suff.	JAM 1995
GL	JAM 1973/1982	STC	Benedict 1972
GSR	Karlgren 1957	TBL	Dai & Huang 1992
GSTC	JAM 1985	TSR	JAM 1972a
HCT	Li 1977	ZMYYC	Sun et al 1991

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[20] For a complete list of my form-class abbreviations for Lahu, cf. GL pp. xxxi-xxxvii.

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