Initial *s*-Actuated Register Shift in Yipoic Languages*

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ABSTRACT

Matisoff hypothesized a system of voiced initials governing register shift in certain Yipoic (Loloish) syllables of the CVQ-type. Along the lines of my 2005 paper —where I argued such a hypothesized system is not needed to explain the reflexes seen in modern Yipoic languages—here, I argue that such a system is not necessary to account for register shift seen in some Yipoic words of the type sVQ, either. This paper suggests that such register shifts are due to the initial s- itself, and that this effect is also seen in the *sRVQ-type syllable and even in some other syllable types. That all these shifts can be connected to the influence of initial *s*- (or a similar voiceless fricative) is an attractive simplification of the historical phonology of the Yipoic group.

Key Words: Loloish (Yipoic) languages, historical phonology, register shifts

In languages such as Tibetan and Chinese, syllables beginning with voiceless ***s-*** and ending in stops (symbolised as **sVQ*) behave in the tonogenetic process no differently than similar syllables with other voiceless initials: they all end up in the upper register. Thus Written Tibetan *bsad* 'killed-'=Lhasa Tibetan *sɛq*, and

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In this area of Yipo-Burmic studies, Thurgood 1977 is an important contribution which has not received the attention it deserves. His paper has several points in common with what I propose here, but we differ in other respects, besides which Matisoff's analyses continue to receive much greater attention. In this paper I hope to renew some older criticism, present new arguments, and propose a more powerful theory in explanation of the YB register inversions.

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bkug 'summoned-'=Lh.Tib. *kuq* with the same tone. In the southern dialects of Chinese which still maintain upper and lower tonal registers for stop-final syllables, words such as 熄 *sĭk*<**sək* [1] 'extinguish-' and 速 *suk*<**sŏk* 'rapid' are found in the same tonal category as words like 渴 *kʰot*<**kʰât* 'thirsty' and 得 *tek*<**tək* 'obtain-'. Similarly, Standard Thai *suk*<**suk* 'ripe' is, according to Li Fang-kuei's system, in the D1S tone category, the same as *tap*<**tap* 'liver'. In Li's 1977 *Handbook*, all 54 words in the **s-* group are marked with "1" in Thai, indicating that they still are in the upper tone-register (which, however, is now pronounced with a low tone). In such languages and language-families as mentioned above, initial **s-* has tonal reflexes just the same as any other voiceless consonant.

In the Tibeto-Burman Yipo-Burmic (YB, AKA Lolo-Burmese) group, however, we see an unusual development: there are some rather common words, classifiable as stop-final syllables with initial ***s-***, which are found in the upper tone register, just like above, but others which are in the lower register or in a special tone category by themselves. Lahu *šîq* 'tree, wood' is in the upper register, but *šǐ*[2] 'new' has a different, mid-rising tone. The latter can be regarded as

1. The transcription immediately following a Chinese graph is LDPI (歷代拼音), an historical spelling that can be pronounced as modern Standard Chinese but at the same time conserves the categories we find in the *Guăng-yŭn*, analogous to English 'right-rite-write-wright'. Old Chinese reconstructions are my own although I often rely on some of the general ideas of Baxter (1992). The acute accent on a vowel merely indicates that in the Song rime tables classify the word in the first, second or fourth, i.e. non-third division. Aside from this reminder, the accent has no phonological value in the OC reconstruction.
2. Diacritics on the vowels represent tonal categories; the system for Lahu is similar to Matisoff's own usage. The following table, similar to the one appearing in Dempsey (2005: 420), shows the origin and transcription of all the stopped-syllable types for some Yipo-Burmic languages.
The top half represents Matisoff's traditional "H" register, the lower half, the "L" register.

PLB	cYB	WD	NOS	LOL	LIS	SAN	LAH	LCH	wBrm	nBsh
pak	**pak**	pʰàq	pʰaq	pʰaq	pʰá	pʰâ	pʰaq	paq	pʰak	pʰák
ˢ**pak**	ʰ**pak**	pàq	paq	paq	pá	pâ	paq	paq	pʰak	ʰpák
N-pak	**ɴpak**	ɴpʰàq	ɴbaq	baq	bah	bâ	baq	baq	pak	pàk
	ᶜ**pak**	bàq	baq	baq	bah	bâ	paq	baq	pak	pàk
C-pak	**bak**	pʰáq	pʰá	pʰá	pʰaq	pʰaq	pʰàq	pàq	pʰak	pʰák
ʔ**bak**	ʰ**bak**	páq	pá	páq	pâ	pá	pá	pàq	pʰak	ʰpák
N-bak	**ɴbak**	ɴpʰáq	ɴbá	bàq		baq	bàq	bàq	pak	pàk
ᶜ**bak** **C-bak**	ᶜ**bak**	báq	(ɴ)bá	bàq	baq	baq	pàq	bàq	pak	pàk

basically a lower register tone, with its lcHani and Lisu cognates being *sɲ̀q* and *ṣìq* respectively. Matisoff in his 1972 "the Loloish Tonal Split Revisited" (= LTSR) explained the difference as *šîq*<**sik* vs. *šǐ* / *sɲ̀q*<**C-sik* where *C* was to be a voiced prefix which "pulled down" the originally voiceless initial into the lower register. In this paper I explain the difference as being *šîq*<**seŋ* vs. *šǐ* / *sɲ̀q*<**sik*.

The tone category in which we find Lahu *šîq* 'tree' is the same as other etymologically voiceless initials, e.g. Lahu *tâq* 'go up-'<**'tak* or *pʰûq* 'overturn'<**pʰup*. In Matisoff's reconstruction, this word's **s-* initial is the unmarked type, thus we may presume that he took the above systems (Thai, Chinese etc.) as models. Therefore he had to find some other, more marked source for the low-tone register type exemplified by *šǐ* 'new'. Benedict's 1972 STC has a tentative-sounding footnote from Matisoff (p. 89): "certain exceptional forms perhaps reflect lost prefixes, e.g. B-L **sat* 'kill' (low series=voiced initial)<TB **g-sat*", but this was quickly superseded by the above-mentioned *LTSR*, in which we find the full-blown theory of voiced prefixes causing an originally voiceless initial to become voiced, and thus end up in the low-tone register. Matisoff thus says that the original difference between these two types (*šîq* 'tree' vs. *šǐ* 'new') was the presence of a since vanished prefix attached to the latter; in this paper I will instead suggest that the explanation for the tonal inversion in the second type is not some hypothetical, ancient prefix but instead is something still right before our eyes, the basic TB *s-* initial itself, and that words of the first type do not represent YB **sVQ*<TB **sVQ*, but are instead later independent YB developments or, more rarely, loan words.[3]

Let us look at a list of words of the first type, adapted mostly from *LTSR* plus some examples from Matisoff 2003 and comparative TB dictionaries such as Huáng 1992 (=YZ) and the Yun-nan sheng-zhi 1998 (=SZ):

gloss	PLB_{JAM}	YB examples	other TB
pour-	*šat	LAH *šə̂q* LCH *sēq·* JIN *šæ·* SAN *xə̂* BIS *šēt*	
rough	*sak	LAH *šâq·* AKH *sāq* JIN *·sa* LQ *sàq* XP *śēq* nLIS *sɛ́* AXI *sɛ̄q*	
rub-	*sap	LAH *šə̂q* AKH *sɔ̄q* nLIS *sǿ* ZW *sop*	

3. For more on this theory and its relationship to stopped syllables with initial stops, see Dempsey (2005).

scrape-	*søk	LAH *šôq* AKH *sə̄q*	wNX *sə́ʻ* (?)
tree	*sik	LAH *šîq* JIN *suu·* LIS *sɨ́* LQ *sɨ̀q* XP *sɨ̄q* SAN *sɻ̂* AXI *sɨ̄q* OP *šêi* DF *sē* BY *sɻ̄q* BOL *sak·* cNUS *siq·*	tbPRM *sɛ̨́* sMP *šeŋ* poKRN *séŋ* KMN *sə́ŋ*
whistle-	*sit	LAH *·šîq* LIS *suuh* (?)	wTIB *sid* (?)
wipe-	*sut	wBRM, lcACH *sut* BOL *sot* LAH *šîq* LIS *sɨ́*	wNX *sɻ́*

Notes: a) 'pour-' (the "-" indicates a verb): Although the *LTSR* and Bradley 1979 both have Bisu *šɛ̀t*, Xú 1998, a 279-page monograph on Bisu, has Huai Chomphu Bisu *šɛt* and Lán-měng (Yunnan) Bisu *śit* with a mid, not low tone for both.[4] b) 'tree': Tibetan dialects show various vowels, e.g. lsTib *šiŋ* , Alikhe Amdo *xʰaŋ*, Zhong-dian Kham *ṣeN·*. The same variations are found in languages of the Qiangic group.

In the above table, if we restrict ourselves to common, phylum-wide etyma, we have only 'tree/wood',[5] and in TB in general this word is not of the **sVQ* type under discussion since it is only in YB that the final *-ŋ* has turned to *-k* (and then often to *-q*).[6]

Here are words of the second type, derived from the same sources:

gloss	PLB_{JAM}	YB examples	other TB
breath(e)	*C-sak	wBRM *sak* LAH *šá* LIS *sɛ̀q* lcHAN *sàq* BOL, cNUS *saq* JIN *sá* GAZ *sâ*	mpKRN *θáq* MNG *sā:* BGS *sak* PṬN *səg* KHM *sɔ̄:* LUŚ *tʰɔk* CKR *əsəqsə* YMC *šak·co* cAO *(t·) saši* JP *n·saq*

4. Xu (1998:166).
5. As for 'wipe, rub-', Lahu has *šîq*, but the word which seems to be cognate in Burmish is **sut*; Matisoff 2003 presents some evidence for *-it* ~ *-ut* alternations in YB, but it mostly involves forms for 'knee' which are not even from the YB group; on the whole, the evidence is not very persuasive. He also wishes to connect Lahu *šîq* with Tangkhul *k·k·šut* 'wipe-', but the normal reflex of TB **s-* in Tangkhul is *tʰ-*, not *š-*, cf. *tʰum* 'three', *tʰat* 'kill-'. The Southern Kuki language Cho has the form *tʰut* 'wipe-' which could be cognate with wBrm *sut*, but it is one lonely possibility, and in a word meaning 'wipe, rub-' an independent onomatopoetic origin is also another factor to consider. The wTib *šud* and Jingpo *g·cút* cited by Matisoff are not possible cognates according to what we know of TB historical sound-changes. Again, all this is about the possible cognacy of one single word, not one out of a list of several established cognates, because there is no such list.
6. Matisoff 2003: 520–525 has a list of such *-ŋ* / *-k* variants, along with related items.

kill-	*C-sat	wBRM *sat* LIS, lcHAN *sèq* JIN *sɛ́* GAZ *sî*	CHP *sət* PKIR **sêt* wTIB *gsod/bsad* alTIB *psat* CGL *še* LUŚ, TNK *t^{h}at* cAO *t·psət* GAR *so^{ʔ}t* JP *sat* eGYR *ka·sat* KMN *sat* TRN *sē*
new	*C-sik	wBRM *sac* BOL *sak* LAH *šǐ* LIS *ṣìq* lcHAN *sǰq* JIN *·śí* GAZ *sí*	eGYR *k·šək* wNX *sǰ*
morning	*C-sok	LAH *šó*	
pluck-	*C-šak	LAH *šá* SAN *šèq* LIS *xàq*	JP *šoq*
seven	*snit	wBRM *hnac* LGS *hnat* lcHAN *sǰq* JIN *šǐ* SGK *sìq*	JP *s·nit* sMP *ʾnis* eGYR *k·šnəs* SDK *sit* eADI *k·nət* PṬN *hnizi* DMS *si·ni* lcTGS *s·nat* cAO *t·net* ZEM *s·na*
thirsty	*C-sip	wBRM *·sip* LAH *šǐ* SAN *sǰq* LIS *sèq* JIN *šǐ* GAZ *·sǰ*	

Notes: 'breath(e)': 'kill, new': In the "adjectives-section" (#0964-1125) of YZ, 89% of the Gyarung entries contain sesquisyllabic forms, the overwhelming majority of which are the same *k^{ə}* as in *k·šək* 'new'. These same prefixes appear with monotonous frequency in YZ's large "verbs-section" also. Such a through-going, regular pattern is not found in any of the other Qiangic languages listed, which indicates that it is a new morphological development within Gyarung itself and not reflective of any ancient TB phonology. In short, such Gyarung forms do not constitute evidence that the words were prefixed in the TB protoforms.

In this second table, if we restrict ourselves to common, phylum-wide etyma, we have 'breath(e)', 'kill-' and, marginally speaking, 'new' and 'pluck-'. Although 'seven' is included in the corresponding table in *LTSR*, it does not fit the **sVQ* type for TB in general nor even for many languages in the YB group. 'Breath(e)' shows occasional prefixing in the Naga group; the Jingpo form with its nasal prefix does not qualify as the type of "voiced prefix" *C- which Matisoff requires in this group.[7] The prefixes seen in Alike Tibetan, Chungli Ao and eastern Gyarung are all voiceless, thus not the best evidence for Matisoff's voiced *C-. It is

7. Matisoff (1972:14).