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***k*-prefixes in Kam-Sui and Kadai: Some Notes**

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1.0 Introduction.

There is a rich literature on the velar animal prefix, starting with Houghton's 1896 suggestion in his article "Outlines of Tibeto-Burman linguistic paleontology" that the velar animal prefix originated in the Mon-Khmer (=Austroasiatic) languages (1896: 31). Since then a number of scholars have focussed on the relics in the Tibeto-Burman languages (Benedict 1972; Matisoff 1969: 190-99; Bradley 1979; Thurgood 1977: 151-54), but as Smith's "The velar animal prefix relic in Vietnam languages" (1975) makes clear the velar animal prefix is also found in all three of the major linguistic stocks of Vietnam: Austroasiatic languages (Vietnamese; North Bahnaric: Bahnar, Cua, Halang, Hre, etc.; South Bahnaric: Charu, Jro, Koho Chil, etc.; Katuic: Bru, Katu, Pacoh), Austronesian languages (Cham, Chru, Haroi, Jorai, Rade, Roglai), and two Tai languages (Kadai: Nung, Black Thai). The velar animal prefix has a geographically wide, linguistically-diverse distribution in Southeast Asian languages.

In the Kam-Sui languages, in the closely-related Lakkia language, and in the Hlai languages (=Li languages of Hainan) there is also evidence for the existence of this velar animal prefix. Once the evidence has been examined, however, it becomes clear that we are dealing with more than one velar prefix from more than one source; in particular, in addition to the velar animal prefix, there is also a velar body part prefix of secondary origins. In this connection, the diachronic origins of such prefixes are examined in conjunction with the examination of the origins and distribution of homophonous but apparently historically-unrelated

k-body part prefix.

2.0 The **k*-animal prefix in proto-Kam-Sui and in Lakkia.

For *at least* three words a **k*-prefix needs to be reconstructed for proto-Kam-Sui: ‘dog’, ‘flea’, and ‘pig’. Within the Kam-Sui languages, the evidence is found in the irregular initials for all three words in Kam and in Mulam for ‘dog’. The occurrence of a velar nasal rather than the expected bilabial nasal suggests that the place of articulation was changed under the former presence of the **k*-animal prefix; it is significant the pattern of initial correspondences is not otherwise attested, aside from these three words for animals.

PKS	Mulam	Kam	T'en	Maonan	Sui	‘gloss’	Lakkia
* <i>k</i> -ṃa 1	ṃwa 1	ṃwa 1'	maa 1	ma 1	ṃa 1	‘dog’	khwō 1
* <i>k</i> -ṃat 7	ṃat 7	ṃwat 7'	mat 7	mat 7	ṃat 7	‘flea’	khwōt 7
* <i>k</i> -ṃu 5	ṃu 5	ṃu 5'	məu 5	mu 5	ṃu 5	‘pig’	khū 1

The Lakkia forms above with their initial *k*'s but with nasalized vowels certainly suggest that the **k*-prefixes of the proto-Kam-Sui reconstructions are correct. Incidentally, the close correlation between the proto-Kam-Sui reconstructions and the Lakkia forms lends support to Solnit's contention that the Kam-Sui languages and Lakkia are more closely related to each other than to any other of the Kadai languages.

In Lakkia the initials of two other animal words show evidence of a velar animal prefix: ‘rat’ and ‘bear’. If the prefix was once present with these forms in Kam-Sui, it has left no residue behind unless this is the source of the proto-tone 3 of ‘rat’ and the tonal and initial irregularities of ‘bear’: if it is the cause of the tonal and initial irregularities of ‘bear’, it might also account for the parallel irregularities with ‘porcupine’. This, however, is purely speculative.

PKS	Mulam	Kam	T'en	Maonan	Sui	‘gloss’	Lakkia
*ṃo 3	ṃo 3	no 3'	noo 3	no 3	ṃo 3	‘rat’	kji:u 3; kō 2
*ṃui 1	—	—	-mii 2-t	moi 1	—	‘bear’	-kū:i 1
*ʔṃui 1	-mɛ 1	me 1	—	—	ʔmi 1	‘bear’	
*ʔṃin 3	min 3	min 3	mien 3	—	—	‘porcupine’	—
*ṃin 3	—	—	—	min 3	ʔbin 3-i	‘porcupine’	—

2.1 The **k*-prefix and the Hlai word for ‘horse’.

The word for ‘horse’ is reconstructed for Proto-Tai and for Proto-Kam-Sui with an initial *m*-, and it occurs in Be and in Lakkia with an initial *m*-. Note that in proto-Tai, in proto-Kam-Sui, in Be, and in Lakkia, the word for horse begins with a bilabial nasal:

	Proto-Tai	Proto-Kam-Sui	Be	Lakkia	Proto-Hlai
‘horse’	* <i>ma</i> 4	* <i>ma</i> 4-r-	<i>ma</i> ? 5	<i>ma</i> 4	* <i>ŋa</i> 3

no!
The **ŋa* is
Mon-Khmer

However, in proto-Hlai there is clear evidence of the influence for an earlier **k*-prefix. The ten language survey of Hlai by Ouyang and Zheng (1983) provided the data base for Matisoff’s “Proto-Hlai initials and tones: a first approximation”. In this work, Matisoff reconstructs a “first approximation” of the initials and tones using nine of the ten languages as his data base. Jiamao, the tenth language, has been left out “due to its extreme (and apparently unsystematic) aberrancy with respect to the others” (1986: 2). This exclusion of Jiamao obviously makes good sense, but it does have the consequence that Matisoff’s reconstruction schema is for a subset of Hlai rather than for all of Hlai. This distinction will have consequences for the discussion below. For ‘horse’ Matisoff (1986: 21) reconstructs **ŋa* 3 for the forms given below (excluding, as noted above, the Jiamao form)¹.

	Proto-Hlai	Baoding	Zhongsha	Heitu	Xifang	Baisha
‘horse’	* <i>ŋa</i> 3	<i>ka</i> 3	<i>ka</i> 3	<i>ŋa</i> 3	<i>ka</i> 3	<i>ka</i> 3
		Yuanmen	Tongshen	Qiandui	Baocheng	Jiamao
		<i>ka</i> 6	<i>ka</i> 6	<i>kha</i> 6	<i>ka</i> 6	<i>pə</i> 5

However, once one incorporates the Jiamao form into the reconstruction, it becomes necessary either to deny that it is related at all or to modify the reconstruction for any subset of Hlai which includes Jiamao. Here, the bilabiality of the Jiamao initial suggests the obvious solution: **k-ma* 3, a reconstruction

1) My own reconstructions have **ŋka* 3 for this set simply because of the nasal/stop alternations in the reflexes, but this difference in reconstructions is of limited importance for the discussion at hand.

quite in line with the rest of Kadai and one which accounts neatly for the nasal/stop alternations found in the data. Note that this analysis does substantiate Matisoff's intuition that Jiamao broke off from proto-Hlai before any of the other languages in this ten language group. [Following a similar line of reasoning, 'rat' might be reconstructed **k-nau* 1.]

2.2 Other apparent *k*-prefixes.

The presence of the **k*-velar animal prefix has been obscured by the presence of other apparent *k*-prefixed forms, most prominently a number of *k*-prefixed body parts. this *k*- body part prefix is a more recent development in which a full functioning in a classifying capacity has reduced to a so-called prefix. The historical development of this "prefix" provides an intriguing parallel for the origins of the **k*-velar animal prefix. The two forms below are among those with evidence of this so-called *k*-body part "prefix":

PKS	Mulam	Kam	T'en	Maonan	Sui	'gloss'	Lakkia
*pram 1	pyam 1	pjam 1	pem 1	pjam 1	pjam 1	'head hair'	kjom 2
—	khya:i 3	sa:i 3	thaa <i>i</i> 4-t	sa:i 3	ha:i 4-t	'intestine'	kja:i 3

In the above words, the Lakkia forms as well as the Mulam word for 'intestine' overtly retain a *k*-; in addition, the Kam-Sui reflexes for the whole 'intestine' series are somewhat irregular. Other Lakkia body part terms also contain an initial *k*-: *kji:ũ* 5 'urine', *kwei* 4 'shit', *kan* 3 *khjie:k* 7 'armpit', *kwot* 7 'bone', *kan* 3 *ja* 2 'ear', *kjẽ* 3 'face', *kjeu* 1 'head', and *kan* 3 *en* 1 'neck'. As will be suggested below, these *k*-initials come from more than one source.

2.3 Diachronic origins.

It appears that where these "*k*-prefixes" were internally developed, the prefixal manifestation represents the reduction of an earlier full morpheme functioning as a part of the sort of incipient classifier system found throughout Southeast Asia and where borrowing took place, it was not a single-consonant prefix which was borrowed but rather what was borrowed was a full morpheme which was first incorporated into the classifier system and only subsequently phonologically

reduced to prefixal status, a pattern by which new prefix systems are constantly being born. For instance, consider the Nung (=Tai) data below:

Nung					
‘bird’	tú nõc	‘rat; mouse’	tú nu	‘duck’	tú pét
‘cow’	tú mò	‘snake’	tú ngu	‘deer’	tú cang
‘tiger’	tú slú	‘dog’	tú má	‘pig’	tú mu
		‘flea; louse’	tú tau		

All that is necessary for a “*t*- animal prefix” to develop from this Nung classifier system is phonological reduction and then loss of the vowel of *tú*.

At least three potential sources of a *k*- body part prefix can be seen, within the classifier system of T’en alone (=Yanghwang), just one Kam-Sui language:

T’en					
‘eye’	ke ʔdaa 13	‘bile’	kja·loo 44	‘arm’	kaan 22 mjaa 35
‘neck back’	ke lau 44	‘breast’	kja·mee 13	‘leg’	kaan 22 tien 13
‘testicles’	ke ljan 44	‘heart’	kja·them 13	‘thigh’	kaan 22 paa 35
‘hand’	ke mjaa 35	‘body’	kja·zen 13	‘handle’	kaan 22 thaan 44
‘nose’	ke naj 13			‘brush’	kaan 22 pet 35

Li (1968: 409–10) lists the *ke* (toneless!) of the first column, describing it as “a prefix used with some body parts, and some other things”, and following it with the words for hand, eye, nose, back of neck, testicles, moon, kitchen range, and this moment. Li (1968: 414–16) lists the form *kjaa* 35 along with *kja*· (its unstressed variant), describing it as “a prefix used with many objects, utensils, instruments, body parts, etc. also as a classifier” [underline mine]. Examination of the approximately sixty-eight or so accompanying forms shows sixty are objects and utensils while seven are body part words: body, breast, heart, bile, bladder, crop (of chicken), and gizzard. Li (1968: 407–8) lists *kaan* 22, describing it as a “classifier of stick-like objects”, and following it with the words for arm, leg, thigh, brush, and umbrella handle.

An analysis of these T’en forms provides some interesting insights into potential sources of prefixes with a semantically restricted range of occurrence. The first form *ke* may be a reduction of the word for head *keu* 22. Four of the five body parts it co-occurs with are either parts of the head or shaped like the head;

the other objects which it co-occurs with are also round-shaped. In any case, the unexpected *k*-initial in the Lakkia word for ‘head hair’ *kjom 2* seems to be a reduction of the word for head, as the T’en form for ‘head hair’ *keu 22 pem 13* (= ‘head’ + ‘hair’) suggests. The co-occurrence of several body parts with the second form *kja* has no ready explanation. The co-occurrence of the third form *kaan 22* with certain body parts follows from the ‘stick-like’ meaning the classifier has; this seems to be the same morpheme found with ‘armpit’, ‘neck’, and inexplicably ‘ear’ in Lakkia. The source of the remaining body part prefixes in Kam-Sui and of the remaining unexpected velars with body parts in lakkia remains inexplicable; however, it seems reasonable to consider these secondary developments.

3.0 Conclusion.

In the Kam-Sui languages, in the closely-related Lakkia language, and in the Hlai languages (=Li languages of Hainan) evidence exists for the velar animal prefix found cross-linguistically throughout Southeast Asia. In addition, other *k*-elements exist which were not part of original initial clusters but instead were secondary developments, probably representing phonological reductions of earlier semi-productive classifier systems. Aside from whatever limited merits the speculations on the origins of such *k*-“prefixes” might have, the recognition of such secondarily-derived prefixes is significant for Kadai reconstruction: while historical reconstruction of the finals is relatively straightforward, a major obstacle lies in the reconstruction of initials due to the thus far inexplicably large number of patterns. Recognition of the existence of these prefixes constitutes a small but necessary step toward the sorting out of the myriad of initial correspondences.

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