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Reconstructing Old Chinese uvulars in the Baxter-Sagart system (ver. 0.97)

Laurent Sagart

Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l'Asie Orientale, Paris

1. Uvular stops were first reconstructed for OC by Pan Wuyun (1997) as the source of MC "laryngeals":

- *q > ʔ (影母)
- *qh- > x (曉母)
- *G- > ɦi (喻_三)

2. Advantage: phonetic series which mix these initials can be treated as showing normal phonetic alternations between stops (B-S 0.97 reconstructions from here onward):

- 于 *_G^w(r)a > hju > yu2 'go; at'
- 汙 *qq^w(r)a > 'wae > wa1 'impure, vile'
- 訖 *q^{wh}(r)a > xju > xu1 'great'

compare:

- 咀 *[dz]a > dzjoX > ju3 'chew'
- 沮 *[ts]a-s > tsjoH > ju4 'marshy ground'
- 且 *[ts^h]A > tshjaeX > qie3 'moreover'

As observed by Pan, stops and fricatives of the same place of articulation (like t and s) do not normally mix in phonetic series.

3. uvulars and labio-uvulars.

It is necessary to reconstruct both plain uvulars:

*q-, *q^h-, *G-

- 遏 *qqat > 'at > è 'repress; cease'
- 歇 *q^hat > xjot > xie4 'cease, rest'
- 褐 *[GG]at > hat > hè 'coarse cloth'

(note: in the B-S system, singleton consonants note type-B/division-III initials, while doubled consonants note type-A/non division-III initials)

and labio-uvulars:

*q^w-, *q^{wh}-, *G^w-

- ❑ 顛 *q^{wh}at-s > xjwojH > huì ‘beard’
- ❑ 穢 *q^wat-s > 'jwojH > huì ‘bad weeds; filth’

Shi Jing rhyme-words from the 歲 series rhyme as OC -at, not -ot; so that the labiality in MC words of that series listed above cannot be explained as due to a rounded vowel.

4. Middle Chinese reflexes of *G^w-, *GG^w- and *GG-

The Middle Chinese initial *hj- (喻三) occurred primarily in words with a rounded vowel and words with medial -w-. Its OC precursor must have been inherently labial or labialized. Baxter and I agree with Pan that it is the MC reflex of *G^w-. It corresponds to g- in WT:

- ❑ 王 *G^waŋ > hjwang > wáng ‘king’ (WT gong 'a superior one')
- ❑ 胃 *[G^w]ə[t]-s > hjw+jH > wèi ‘stomach’ (WT grod-pa 'stomach')
- ❑ 于 *G^w(r)a > hju > yu2 ‘go; at’ (WT Hgro 'go')
- ❑ 越 *[G^w]at > hjwot > yuè ‘transgress’ (WT Hgrod-pa 'to go, to travel')
- ❑ 衰 *[G^w]a[n] > hjwon > yuán ‘long robe’ (WT gon 'garment')

*G^w- is a type-B initial. Its type-A counterpart is *GG^w-. Baxter and I also agree with Pan that the MC reflex of *GG^w- is hw- (匣):

- ❑ 皇 *GG^waŋ > hwang > huáng ‘sovereign’
- ❑ 畫 *[GG^w]rek-s > hweaH > huà ‘draw’
- ❑ 緩 *[GG^w]a[n]? > hwanX > huǎn ‘slack’

We think OC *GG- goes to MC h- (匣):

- ❑ 后 *[GG](r)o? > huwX > hòu ‘sovereign’ (WT mgo 'head', WB u 'head')
- ❑ 褐 *[GG]at > hat > hè ‘coarse cloth’

5. Distinguishing velar and uvular series.

OC *GG^w- and *GG- are difficult to distinguish from *gg^w- and *gg-, which also evolve to MC h-. We propose basing the decision on the phonetic series. We observed that when a particular rhyme category has two competing series with the same velar initials, it is usually the case that only one of those two also includes MC reflexes of OC uvulars: '- (glottal stop), x- or h-. Here are some paired phonetic series with vowel -o-:

rhyme	just velars	Mixed: velars + '-/x-/h-
-o	GSR 109 葍	GSR 108 句
-o	GSR 113 侯	GSR 112 后
-oŋ	GSR 1172 工	GSR1173 公
-ok	GSR 1225 角	GSR 1226 殼

The pure velar series we reconstruct with OC velars: 菁 kk-, 侯 gg-, 工 kk-, 角 kk-; and the mixed velar+"laryngeal" series we reconstruct with OC uvulars: 句 q(q)-, 后 GG-, 公 qq-, 殼 qq^(h)-.

We think 后 and 褐 have uvular initials because they occur in such mixed series.

6. Why are there velars in uvular series ?

We assume that OC uvular stops evolve to MC velars when preceded by minor syllables, consisting of a consonant plus ə, as in these examples of word families from one phonetic series:

- to rest
 - 歇 *q^hat > xjot > xiē 'cease, rest'
 - 愒 *Cə.q^hrat > khjet > qì 'to rest'
- empty
 - 虛 *q^h(r)a > xjo > xù 'empty'
 - 虛 *Cə.q^h(r)a > khjo > xù 'ruins'
- shadow
 - 影 *qraŋʔ > 'jaengX > yǐng 'shadow'
 - 景 *Cə.qraŋʔ > kjaengX > jǐng 'bright; image'
- old man
 - 公 *Cə-qqoŋ > kuwng > gōng 'father; prince'
 - 翁 *qqoŋ > 'uwng > wēng 'old man'

7. What is the MC reflex of *G- ?

We think it is y- (喻四). That is, MC y- has two distinct OC sources: (1) OC *l-, and (2) OC *G-.

Examples of MC y- from OC *l- are found in phonetic series with MC d- and/or th- (but no t-), and correspond to TB l-:

- 余 *la > yo > yú '1sg.' (prob. a polite form. Mikir la 'here, where the speaker is')
- 以 *mə-ləʔ > yiX > yǐ 'take, use' (Jingpo la 'take')
- 揚 *laŋ > yang > yáng 'lift, raise' (WT lang 'rise, get up')
- 葉 *l[a]p > yep > yè 'leaf' (Jingpo lap 'leaf')
- 易 *N(ə)-lek-s > yeH > yì 'easy' (WT legs 'good, happy, etc.')
- 用 *loŋ-s > yowngH > yòng 'use' (WT longs 'to use')

Examples of MC y- from OC *G- are found in phonetic series without MC d- and/or th-, but with velars and/or laryngeals initials. They often correspond to TB words in y- or g-y-:

- 羊 *G(r)aŋ > yang > yáng 'sheep' (Matisoff PTB *yang 'sheep')

- ❑ 洋 *[ɣ](r)aŋ > yang > yáng 'a great expanse of water' (WT yangs-pa 'wide, broad, large')
- ❑ 祥 *s-[ɣ]aŋ > zjang > xiáng 'auspicious' (WT g-yang 'happiness, blessing, prosperity')

Note that all three examples above are from the phonetic series of 羊 (GSR 732), from which Karlgren arbitrarily excluded

- ❑ 羌 *Cə.q^haŋ > khjang > qiāng 'Western tribes'
- ❑ 姜 *Cə.qaŋ > kjang > jiāng 'a family name'

More examples of MC y- from OC *ɣ-:

- ❑ 亦 *[ɣ](r)Ak > yek > yì 'armpit' (Benedict TB *(g-)yak 'armpit')
- ❑ 夜 *[ɣ]ak-s > yaeH > yè 'night' (Benedict TB *ya 'night')

Although this phonetic series (GSR 800) has no velars or laryngeals, the word 亦 'armpit' has a related words with a MC velar initial:

膂 *kkak (or *Cə.qqak ?) > kak > gē 'armpit'.

8. word-family contacts between MC y and laryngeals/velars.

Our proposal that OC *ɣ- > MC y- makes sense of phonetic series and word-family contacts between MC laryngeals/velars and y-:

- ❑ 舉 *Cə.q(r)a > kjoX > jǔ 'lift, raise'
- ❑ 與 *ɣ(r)a > yoX > yǔ 'give; for; and'

- ❑ 益 *qek > 'jiek > yì 'increase'
- ❑ 溢 *[ɣ]ik > yit > yì 'overflow'

- ❑ 衍 *[ɣ](r)a[n]? > yenX > yǎn 'overflow'
- ❑ 愆 *Cə.q^h(r)a[n] > khjen > qiān 'exceed, err'

If the only source of MC y- was *l-, the voiceless members in the above examples would need l-clusters, for instance Sagart (1999) had 舉 ^bk-la, Zhengzhang (2003) has 益 qleg, 公 kloong. These l-clusters, however, are not supported by comparative evidence (for 公, compare WB hông 'old'). With our proposal, there is no need of l-clusters in these words.

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