

Outlying Kam-Tai: notes on Ta Mit Laha

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1. Introduction

In 1942 Paul K. Benedict wrote of the “Kadai stock”, which he has sometimes since called the outlier languages, that they had received scant attention from anthropologists and linguists.¹ Regrettably, that assessment about Qabiao (Laqua or Pubiao), Laha, Lhai, Lachi, and Gelao remains still largely true today. In this paper to honor our friend and colleague we offer notes from the field concerning perhaps the least-known of these five outliers, namely Laha, in its least described variety, which is Laha of Tà Mít Township of Lào Cai Province in Vietnam. We briefly report here some preliminary observations on the sound system of this language along with some sample comparisons with forms in the Kam-Tai stock and other outlier languages of Kadai such as Gelao, Lachi, and Qabiao—questions with which Professor Benedict has been concerned for half a century.

Information about the Laha language of Vietnam has until relatively recently been unavailable to Kadai researchers. At the turn of the century there were reports by the French and in the 70's a visit was paid to Laha areas by Professor André Haudricourt. Information in *Đặng Nghiêm Vạn et al. 1972* is generally regarded as being the earliest work about Laha by Vietnamese scholars. The most extensive recent source on Laha is the Russian language publication by Solntseva and *Hoàng Văn Ma 1986*, which primarily describes the variety spoken in *Sơn La* Province. Laha is also the focus of work in *Hoàng Văn Ma 1988*. In China a language or language group close to Laha, known as Paha or Buyang, is discussed by Professor Liang Min 1990 and even more recently by Li Jinfang 1996a and 1996b.

The name Laha has not always been clearly distinguished from Laqua (also known as Pen-ti Lolo, Pupéo, or Qabiao). For instance, Professor *Cầm Trọng*, a Vietnamese ethnologist (*Hoàng Văn Ma, 1992:10*) has opined that *Laha* and *Laqua* are in fact variants of the same name. But whether or not the two designations share a common origin, the languages of the Laha and the Laqua (henceforth referred to herein by their autonym, Qabiao) are not, in fact, a single language, as shown by the work of *Hoàng Văn Ma* and our own data. Having

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said this, however, it may still be observed that among the outliers there is some evidence that Laha and Qabiao share certain features not reflected in other outlier languages.

The Laha language is spoken in Vietnam at a somewhat greater distance from the Chinese border than its four sister outlier languages, whereas Buyang in China is spoken in areas of Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces just north of the Vietnam-China border. The Laha population in Vietnam was 1,394 according to the 1989 census data, (SDSRV 1991) and in China they are estimated to number about 2,000 (Li 1996a:1). The Buyang speakers in China also report that they have relatives now living in Phongsaly Province in Laos, though, to our knowledge, no linguistic information exists to describe such a group. In Vietnam there are two general settlement areas, one in Thuận Châu, Quỳnh Nhai, and Mường La Districts, especially at Bản Bung and a second in Sơn La Province in Lào Cai Province at Than Uyên District Tà Mít Township, 50-60 km to the northwest, Ma (1988:131). The Sơn La speakers refer to themselves as *Khla Phlao* or *Laha Phlao*, the 'Dry Laha,' and the Lào Cai Ta Mít speakers refer to themselves as *Laha Ung* [la³³ha²¹ʔuŋ³¹], the 'Wet Laha' (EMPV 1978:243), referring presumably to whether these groups plant wet fields or grow only dry hill rice. All the villages in Vietnam are located on or near the Nậm Mu River, possibly the original migratory link between otherwise separated communities.

The data reported here were obtained from Mr. Hoàng Văn Phòm, 26 years of age from Lào Cai Province, Than Uyên District, Tà Mít Township, Bản Muot Village. From him we learned that in Than Uyên District there are eight villages of Laha in Lào Cai, said to number more than 1,000 speakers. They are surrounded by Black Thai speakers and virtually everyone is bilingually competent in that language as well as their own first language. According to EMPV (1978:243-48), the Laha presence is thought to have antedated the arrival of the Black Thai in this area in the 11-12th century, based on references to the presence of the ancestors of the Laha in old Black Thai script records. The prior presence of the Laha is also supported both in oral tradition and by the contemporary more advantageous location of the Laha villages relative to those of the Thai—with Laha villages being located closest to the river on the best available land, with the Thai villages more distant from the river.

As for the historical demographics of the close linguistic relatives of the Laha in China, Li 1996a reports that groups, commonly known by their Zhuang exonym as *Buyang* 布央 were once found in a variety of locations further to the north and east of their current settlement areas on the Vietnam-China borderlands. Indeed, there is an apparent north-east to south-west migration vector, as noted elsewhere (Edmondson and Li 1996), that would place the Vietnam Laha communities as an ancient vanguard that exited China along what we have called the "language corridor". That the Laha/Buyang were once much more numerous than their present population of 5,000 is perhaps reflected in the widespread toponyms involving the form 央 *yang*, as suggested in Li 1996a. This territory stretches across the southwestern border areas of Guizhou Province and the adjacent areas in Guangxi Province in a band from Tianlin County in the east to Longlin County in the west and from Nanning City in the east to Napo County in the west. The designation *yang* or, possibly *lang*, referred to a group in Chinese chronicles as

descendants of the 百越, Bách Việt, or Hundred Yue, a conglomerate of peoples south of the Yangtze in pre-Han times.

In China the Buyang at Yunnan Guangnan Yanglian and Anshe Villages call themselves *pa³³ ha³³*. The following sample comparisons suggest how close the Laha of Vietnam and the Paha Buyang of China appear to be:

| | Laha | Paha | | Laha | Paha | | Laha | Paha |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 'one' | tɕam ³¹ | tsam ⁴⁵ | 'two' | sa ³⁴³ | θa ³²² | 'three' | qu ³⁴³ | tu ³²² |
| 'four' | pa ³⁴³ | pa ³²² | 'five' | ma ³³ | ṃha ³³ | 'six' | dam ³⁴³ | nam ³¹ |
| 'seven' | tho ³⁴³ | ru ³³ | 'eight' | ma ³³ | mu ³¹ | 'nine' | so ³³ | ɕha ³³ |
| | | | | hu ³³ | | | wa ²⁴ | |
| 'ten' | pət ²³ | vat ⁵⁵ | 'rain' | zen ³³ | zin ³¹ | 'star' | ma ³⁴³ | roŋ ³¹ |
| | | | | | | | luŋ ³³ | |
| 'salt' | ɲɔ ³³ | ɲu ³¹ | 'bird' | ma ³³ | nok ¹¹ | 'ear' | ka ³³ | ka ³²² |
| | | | | nək ³³ | | | hu ³³ | |
| 'mouth' | mɔɔn ²⁴ | mam ³¹ | 'eye' | ma ³³ | ma ⁰ | 'beard' | not ³² | mut ¹¹ |
| | | | | ta ³³ | da ³³ | | | |
| 'blood' | pat ³² | pe ³³ | 'bone' | thak ³² | daŋ ³²² | 'liver' | qap ³² | tap ⁵⁵ |

2. Ta Mit Laha

In this paper we present very preliminary results from a field trip to one Laha area completed only days before the writing of this paper. Our analysis is consequently still very preliminary.

The language at Ta Mit has a sizable number of two syllable words and six tones. Syllable codas /-p -t -k -m -n -ŋ -i -u/ occur. Laha is also one of only two languages known to preserve the final *-l*, which in Ta Mit has changed to *-n*, but is attested as *-l* in Laha Phlao of Nong Lay. Vowel length is distinguished in syllables that end in one of these six sounds. Laha has six tonal contrasts in syllables ending in vowels and that includes two tonal contrasts in syllables ending in /-p -t -k/. Generally then, Laha Ung demonstrates a greater number of disyllabic words (Benedict's dyadic forms), whereas Laha Phlao has monosyllables with clusters (Benedict's monadic forms), cf. Benedict 1992.

2.1 The initials

Ta Mit Laha has a rather asymmetric pattern of initial consonants with five points of articulation and four manners in stops:

| | | | | |
|----|----------------|-----|---|---|
| p | t ² | tɕ | k | ʔ |
| ʔb | ʔd | tɕh | | |
| b | d | | | |
| m | n | ɲ | ŋ | h |
| f | s | | x | |
| v | z | | | |
| w | l | j/z | | |

Laha initials are exemplified in the following forms:

| | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| p | pɔɔm ²⁴ | 'mountain' | pa ²⁴ | 'rice husk' |
| | pa ³⁴³ | 'four' | pat ²⁴ | 'blood' |
| t | ta ²⁴ wan ³³ | 'sun' | tam ²¹² | 'short' |
| | tap ³² | 'liver' | tau ²¹² | 'turtle' |
| tɕ | tɕam ³¹ | 'one' | tɕɛ ³³ | 'tea' |
| | tɕwɔn ³⁴³ | 'buy' | | |
| k | kaan ³¹ | 'chin' | kai ³¹ | 'feces' |
| | kai ³⁴³ | 'chicken' | kam ³⁴³ | 'bitter' |
| ʔ | ʔɔ ²⁴ | 'insipid' | ʔɔk ³³ laak ³⁴ | 'give birth' |
| th | thak ³² | 'bone' | tham ²¹² | 'cave' |
| | tho ³⁴³ | 'seven' | thuɲ ³⁴³ | 'leaf' |
| tɕh | tɕhuk ³³ ma ³³ | 'wash hands' | | |
| ʔb | ʔbɔɔk ²³ | 'flower' | ʔbi ²⁴ | 'cold' |
| | ʔbur ²¹² ti ³¹ | 'right side' | | |
| ʔd | ʔdɔn ²¹² | 'white' | ʔdiŋ ³¹ | 'black' |
| | ʔdun ³⁴³ | 'stone' | | |
| b | ba ³⁴³ | 'dog' | bam ³³ | 'chop' |
| | bɔk ³² ta ²⁴ | 'skin animal' | | |
| d | dam ³⁴³ | 'six' | dap ³² ta ²⁴ | 'close eyes' |
| | dun ²⁴ | 'see' | | |
| m | ma ²¹ | 'cooked rice' | mat ³² | 'ant' |
| | ma ³³ hu ³³ | 'eight' | mai ²¹ | 'woman' |
| n | na ²¹² | 'bow' | na ³³ | 'field, wet' |
| ɲ | ɲaai ³⁴³ | 'sand' | ɲɔ ³³ | 'salt' |

²Mr. Phòm invariably pronounced /t/ as [q] in syllable-initial position, even though he also produced [th-] for /th-/. In fact, this substitution was true even in his Vietnamese, a fact of which he was quite aware. When he saw our perplexed looks, he reassured us, writing <t-> on paper, "it is a [qe]". We cannot be sure if this substitution represented a linguistic change, an idiosyncratic development in his speech, or a speech impediment. In this paper we have transcribed his [q-] as /t-/, because he obviously intended this sound, as he indicated to us, and because the /t-/ was, from comparative evidence, the expected reflex in Laha.

| | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| ŋ | ŋa ³³ | 'snake' | ŋaan ³³ | 'thorn' |
| | ŋam ²¹² | 'think' | | |
| f | faai ²¹² | 'cloth' | faai ³⁴³ | 'dam' |
| | faan ²⁴ | 'village' | | |
| s | so ³³ wa ²⁴ | 'nine' | suan ³⁴³ | 'garden' |
| | suŋ ³⁴³ | 'teeth' | | |
| x | xa ³³ | 'cogongrass' | xam ³³ | 'gold' |
| | xak ³² | 'leg' | xi ³⁴³ | 'excrement' |
| h | haai ³³ | 'shoes' | haap ²³ | 'carry pole' |
| | haam ³⁴³ | 'carry mid-pole' | | |
| v | ven ³³ mu ³³ | 'ring' | | |
| z | za ³³ | 'grandmother' | za ³⁴³ | 'medicine' |
| | zɛn ³³ | 'rain' | | |
| w | waan ³⁴³ | 'high' | wan ³³ | 'day' |
| | wa ²⁴ thui ²¹² | 'wash dishes' | | |
| j/z | jip ³² lɔ ³⁴³ | 'push in firewood' | xau ²¹² ju ³⁴³ | 'sleep' |
| l | lɔ ³⁴³ | 'firewood' | lɔɔi ²⁴ | 'swim' |
| | luŋ ³⁴³ | 'yellow' | | |

2.2 Syllable codas

Ta Mit has eight syllable codas: /-p -t -k -m -n -ŋ -i -u/, as illustrated in the following words:

| | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| -p | tap ²³ | 'liver' | ko ²¹² kap ²³ | 'duck' |
| -t | maat ³² | 'socks' | haat ³⁴ | 'crab' |
| -k | laak ³² | 'child' | thak ³⁴ | 'bone' |
| -m | pɔɔm ²⁴ | 'mountain' | dam ³⁴³ | 'six' |
| -n | wan ³³ | 'day' | ta ³³ lin ³⁴³ | 'tongue' |
| -ŋ | hɔɔŋ ²¹² | 'room' | kan ³³ luŋ ³¹ | 'elbow' |
| -i | hɔɔi ³⁴³ | 'snail' | ko ²¹² ʔai ²¹² | 'elder brother' |
| -u | laak ³⁴ pau ³¹ | 'man, male' | saŋ ²¹² saau ²⁴ | 'spider' |

2.3 The vowels

The Ta Mit Laha vowels are as follows:

| | | |
|----|----|----|
| i | ɯ | u |
| e | | ɤ |
| ɛɛ | a | ɔɔ |
| | aa | |

The vowels occur in Laha forms as follows:

| | | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| i | siŋ ³⁴³ wan ³³ fi ²¹² | ‘nitre’ ‘day before yesterday’ | kim ³³ | ‘salty’ |
| u | fui ³⁴³ ka ³³ lui ³³ | ‘die’ ‘far’ | hwi ³⁴³ | ‘fly, to’ |
| u | bu ³⁴³ ʔdun ³⁴³ | ‘pig’ ‘stone’ | ʔuŋ ³¹ | ‘water’ |
| e | ko ²¹² ʔbe ³¹ ko ²¹² he ³¹ | ‘goat’ ‘pangolin’ | la ³⁴ xe ²⁴ | ‘head’ |
| ɛɛ | xək ³² keɛn ³¹ | ‘guest’ ‘hard’ | kɛɛŋ ³⁴³ | ‘soup’ |
| ɣ | pɣt ²³ kɣŋ ³¹ | ‘ten’ ‘shrimp’ | ma ³³ nɣk ⁴³ xən ³³ | ‘bird’ ‘person’ |
| o | no ³² so ³³ wa ²⁴ | ‘beard’ ‘nine’ | tho ³⁴³ | ‘seven’ |
| ɔɔ | mɔɔk ³² hɔɔm ³⁴³ | ‘cloud’ ‘garlic’ | hɔɔŋ ²¹² | ‘room’ |
| a | pa ³⁴³ mak ³⁴ | ‘four’ ‘love’ | ŋa ²² man ³³ | ‘snake’ ‘new’ |
| aa | ma ³³ haak ²³ saan ²¹ | ‘taro’ ‘elephant’ | kaan ³¹ | ‘chin’ |

The usual Tai rule about vowel length seems to apply. Namely, length is contrastive only in syllables that end in consonants /-p -t -k -m -n -ŋ/ and /i u/ and not in open syllables. The sound /-ɣ-/ occurs only in closed syllables and is probably the result of unrounding an /-o-/.

2.4 The tones

The six tones of open syllables are illustrated in the set:

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| na ³³ | ‘wet field’ |
| ma ³¹ | ‘horse’ |
| na ³⁴³ | ‘face’ |
| ma ²⁴ | ‘centipede’ |
| na ²¹² | ‘arrow’ |
| ma ²¹ | ‘rice’ |

As can be seen in Figure 1, the tone system of Laha resembles that of Tai languages in many ways. Specifically, one can distinguish four tone types in words that Laha shares with Tai languages and these can, with varying degrees of certainty, be assigned to the tones A, B, C, and D. So for instance, tone 343 corresponds well with the A tone box one (as Gedney called it, and associated historically with voiceless friction), while tone 24 corresponds to the A tone box

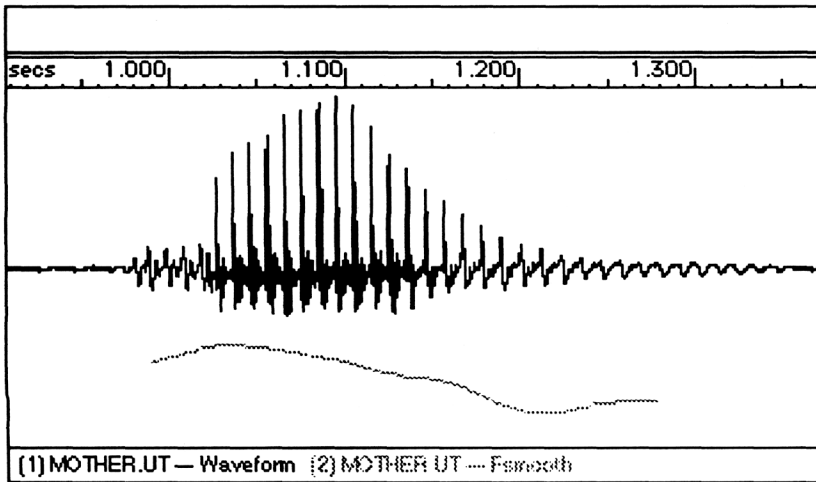
two and three (plain and preglottalized initial consonants), and tone 33 corresponds to the A tone box four (original voiced). Thus, we find *suan*³⁴³ garden in tone A1, *ma*³³ *ta*²⁴ eye in A2, and *ɲa*³³ snake in tone A4. The D tone also corresponds with a good deal of certainty, with original voiced initials reflected in the modern Laha high tone 43 and the original voiceless consonants the current low tone, a kind of limited tonal flip-flop familiar in a number of Southwestern Tai languages on a more extensive basis. Tai vocabulary that normally shows up in the tone categories B and C are, however, mixed in TM Laha, some forms identified with Tai B and others with Tai C tone both occurring as Laha 212 tone. A similar ambiguity exists for tones B and C forms appearing in Laha 31 tone. Thus, the Gedney diagram for Laha yields a developmental pattern A1-A23-A4; B123=C123, B4, C4; D123; D4, giving six tones in live syllables and two tones in dead syllables.

| A | B | C | D |
|--|--|--|---|
| ɲoŋ ³⁴³ pond suan ³⁴³ garden ba ³⁴³ dog bu ³⁴³ pig faai ³⁴³ dam xiŋ ³⁴³ ginger mai ³⁴³ thread | xi ²¹² ride tam ²¹² short thu ²¹² bean tau ²¹² turtle haan ³¹ goose | hui ²¹² carry hanging tham ²¹² cave ma ²¹² rise, grow up faai ²¹² cloth svi ²¹² intestine saŋ ²¹² saau ²⁴ spider | bat ³² flea ʔbot ³² blind laak ³⁴ child maat ³² socks tap ³² liver pɔɔt ³² lungs |
| ma ³³ sam ²⁴ hair ma ³³ ta ²⁴ eye ma ³³ dvi ²⁴ gall piŋ ²⁴ wet leech pak ³² tu ²⁴ door tom ²⁴ mud | ← | ka ²⁴ seedling faan ²⁴ village mai ²⁴ tree saau ²⁴ spider | pat ²⁴ blood maak ²⁴ fruit haap ²³ pole carry |
| ɲa ³³ snake xam ³³ gold na ³³ wetfield meŋ ³³ wan ³³ fly xa ³³ cogongrass ka ³³ ma ³³ hand | ha ²¹ dryfield mai ²¹ female ma ²¹ rice za ²¹ grndmother | xa ³¹ trade ma ³¹ horse kvŋ ³¹ shrimp kai ³¹ excrement | |

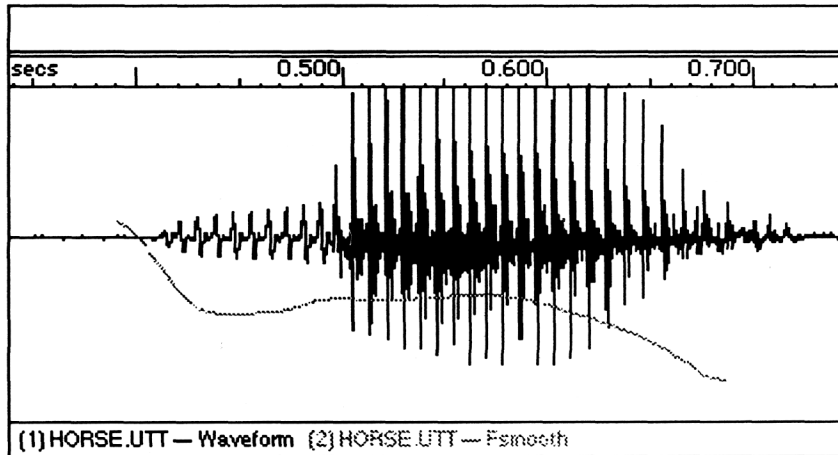
Figures 1: Laha tones according to Proto-Tai categories

An important phonetic feature of Laha is that the tone 31 is accompanied by glottal constriction at the end of the syllable in the manner found in the C tones of Tai languages. Figures 2 and 3 provide instrumental confirmation of this feature. Both figures show wave form (above) and pitch trajectory (below). In Figure 2, the 21 tone, voicing, as indicated by the pitch track, is seen to persist even when the amplitude of the wave form above it is quite weak and shows hyperbolic collapse. The pitch even rises a bit at the very end. Figure 3, by contrast, shows a more abrupt termination of both pitch trajectory and wave form, as would be expected in

the case of syllable-final glottal constriction, which may be represented in a close transcription as [ma^{31?}].



Figures 2: Wave form and pitch trajectory of Laha *ma*²¹ 'mother'



Figures 3: Wave form and pitch trajectory of Laha *ma*^{31?} 'horse'

3. Comparative comments

The Laha language possesses a rather large shared vocabulary with the Tai branch, a somewhat lesser body of lexical items shared with the four sister outlier languages, and a very small body of forms in common with Kam-Sui. It is somewhat uncertain, however, to what extent the “Tai” vocabulary of Laha represents general inheritance as opposed to borrowing from their long-standing Black Thai neighbors. Fairly obvious loans like *then*³⁴³ ‘sky (ultimately from Chinese 天 *tian* ‘sky’), the name of a celestial deity *then luông* among the Black Thai, cf. EMPV 160, perhaps reflects this loan source. Laha also shares a number of items only with the Kadai outlier languages such as those in Figure 4.³

| | Laha | Qabiao | Gelao | Lachi |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| ‘water’ | ʔuŋ ³¹ | ʔoŋ ⁴³ | ŋ ³³ | ʔi ³¹ |
| ‘rice’ | ma ²¹ | mi ⁴⁵ | mɔ ³³ | m̄m̄ ³³ |
| ‘alcohol’ | fu ³⁴³ | pau ⁵² | plu ³⁵ | qu ⁵² |
| ‘rain’ | zen ³³ | sau ²¹ | | |
| ‘star’ | ma ³³ luŋ ³³ | qa ⁴³ luŋ ⁴³ | ndu ⁵³ ndæ ³³ | m̄ ³¹ thi ⁵² li ⁵² |
| ‘salt’ | ɲɔ ³³ | qa ⁴³ ɲu ⁴³ | ɲu ⁵³ | ɲu ³³ |
| ‘thorn’ | ŋaan ³¹ | ŋuun ⁴⁵ | qa ²² ɲi ³³ | mja ³¹ m̄ ¹² |
| ‘monkey’ | xv̄k ³² | rhok ²¹ | | |
| ‘crab’ | ko ²¹² haat ³⁴ | qa ²¹ rat ⁴⁵ | | |
| ‘spider’ | saŋ ²¹ saau ²⁴ | ko ²¹ raau ³²³ | | |
| ‘left’ | m̄eŋ ²⁴ | miŋ ³²³ | | |
| ‘tooth’ | suŋ ³⁴³ | suaŋ ⁵² | ndzi ¹³ phi ¹³ | fi ⁵² or mso |
| ‘bow’ | na ²¹² | ne ⁴³ | | |
| ‘rat’ | laai ²¹² | qa ²¹ nai ⁴³ | ʔei ⁵³ (ɲoʔi) | ʔa ³¹ lja ⁵² |
| ‘sand’ | ɲaai ³⁴³ | tsɔi ³²³ | la ³³ ʂa ³¹ ʂa ³¹ | ɲa ⁵² |

Figures 4: Vocabulary shared with outlier languages

As for items Laha shares in common with languages of the Kam-Sui Branch but not Tai, there are forms of the following sort:⁴

³The Qibiao, Gelao, and Lachi forms are taken from our own unpublished field notes. Qabiao is from Hà Giang Province Phố Là, Gelao is White Gelao [ta³⁵ʔlu³³] from Phố Là, and Lachi is from Bán Phùng.

⁴We employ Baccam Don et al 1989 for our Black Thai examples.

| | Laha | Kam | ≠ | Black Thai |
|---------|--|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| 'tail' | svt ³² | sət ⁷ | | haŋ ¹ |
| 'blood' | pat ²⁴ | phat ⁹ , | | luət ⁸ |
| 'fire' | puj ³⁴³ | pwj ¹ | | fai ² |
| 'child' | la ³⁴ | laak ¹⁰ | | luuk ¹⁰ |
| 'husk' | pa ²⁴ | pa ⁶ | | kep ⁹ |
| 'full' | thik ³² | tik ⁹ | | ʔim ¹ |
| 'dream' | ɲun ³⁴³ tɕe ³³ pan ²⁴ | pan ¹ | | fan ¹ |

Figures 5: Vocabulary shared with Kam-Sui languages

Ta Mit Laha is a language with perhaps the best support within Kadai for original disyllabic forms, as comparison to Austro-Tai, Kam-Tai, and other outliers shows.

| | Ta Mit Laha | Austro-Tai from Benedict 1975; Tai from Li 1977 |
|------------|--|---|
| 'night' | ka ³³ lom ³³ | 'dark' Puyuma qəzəm |
| 'bear' | ka ³³ thui ³³ mi ³³ | 'bear' Formosan Seediq kumay/sumay |
| 'fish' | ma ³³ la ³³ | 'fish' AT *mbraw, Puyuma bulaw |
| 'charcoal' | ma ³³ la ³³ pyi ²⁴ | 'fruit (?) of the hearth' AT *ndapuy |
| 'far' | ka ³³ lui ³³ | 'far' Proto-Tai *klai ^A |
| 'near' | ka ³³ la ³¹ | 'near' Proto-Tai *krəi ^C |
| 'dark' | ka ³¹ lvm ³³ | 'dark' Proto-Tai *klam ^B |

Figures 6: Vocabulary suggesting original disyllabic forms

In historical comparative terms the initials in Laha and possibly other outlier languages are observed to have certain recurring regularities vis-à-vis the reconstruction of Proto-Tai initials (Li Fang Kuei, 1977). Though the outlier languages may have arrived at their present state by a different route from that of Kam-Tai, one may still usefully note the following comparisons. For example, Proto-Tai (PT) *ʔb : Laha (L) f > ph (f > h, when followed by high back vowels) and *ʔd(l) : Laha (L) th.

| | Ta Mit Laha | cf. Proto-Tai |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 'thunder' | than ³³ | *ʔdaŋ ^A |
| 'moon' | than ³⁴³ | *ʔbluən ^A |
| 'navel' | thau ³³ | *ʔbluu ^A |
| 'bone' | thak ³² | *ʔdluok ^{DL} |
| 'village' | faan ²⁴ | *ʔbaan ^C |
| 'fly, to' | huan ³⁴³ | *ʔbin ^A |
| 'rope; twist, to' | fan ²⁴ | *ʔban ^A |

Figures 7: Ta Mit Laha voiceless friction initials in reference to Proto-Tai

The above correspondences do not, however, hold for a number of forms that have presumably been borrowed from Black Thai, e.g. *ʔɔɔ*⁹ ‘blind’; *ʔbur*²¹² ‘side’; *ʔbik*²³ ‘carry on shoulder’; *ʔɔɔk*²³ ‘flower’; *ʔdɔi*²⁴ ‘gallbladder’.

A second comparison involves Proto-Tai **kʰm* : Laha *b* Somewhat similarly, Proto-Tai **ʔhr/hl/hŋ* : Laha *d*, as in the following forms:

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|-----|---|
| ‘pig’ | bu ³⁴³ | cf. | * <i>kʰmu</i> ^A |
| ‘dog’ | ba ³⁴³ | | * <i>kʰma</i> ^{A1} |
| ‘flea’ | bat ³² | | * <i>kʰmat</i> ^{DS1} |
| ‘stone’ | dun ³⁴³ | | * <i>ʔhrin</i> ^A |
| ‘see, to’ | dun ²⁴ | | * <i>ʔhren</i> ^A |
| ‘big, great’ | duŋ ³⁴³ | | * <i>ʔhluŋ</i> ^A |
| ‘white’ | dɔn ²¹² | | * <i>ʔhlon</i> ^{A1} |
| ‘descendant’ | daan ²⁴ | | * <i>ʔhleen</i> ^{A/} ‘grandchild’ * <i>ʔhlaan</i> ^C |
| ‘grass’ | dau ³⁴³ | | * <i>ʔhɯwa</i> ^{C1} |
| ‘pull (grass), to’ | dɯk ³² | | * <i>ʔhɔk</i> ^{DS1} |
| ‘close the eyes’ | dap ³² ta ²⁴ | | * <i>ʔhlap</i> ^{DS1} |
| ‘winnow basket’ | diŋ ²¹² | | * <i>ʔkraŋ/khruŋ</i> ^C |
| ‘trousers’ | diŋ ²⁴ | | * <i>ʔklaŋ</i> ^A ‘cover, hide, to’ |

Figures 8: Ta Mit Laha plain voiced initials in reference to Proto-Tai

Briefly stated in conclusion, the Laha language of Ta Mit looks as though it will prove useful in future work in deciphering the history of the outlier Kadai languages Gelao, Lachi, and Qabiao in that it:

1. Preserves evidence of the syllable coda (along with Qabiao) to a much greater degree than Lachi and Gelao.
2. Preserves a great many examples of *morphologically simple* disyllabic word forms (again like Qabiao), many supportive of the Austro-Tai hypothesis.
3. Demonstrates a general resemblance to Tai tonal organization by having Tai-like rules for assigning tones to vocabulary, borrowed and non-borrowed.
4. Manifests the characteristic glottal closure in the C2 tone as in Tai.

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