Laha reexamined

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A preliminary note on this North Vietnam language, based on very limited material gleaned from a 1972 Vietnamese source, is included in Benedict 1975 ("ATLC":[*Introduction to Glossary*]186-900). A later Russian-Vietnamese work (Solntsev et al., eds. 1986) on one of the three known dialects, Khla-Phlao (KP)[1], now provides excellent material for a full analysis of Laha, with findings as outlined below. Note must be made, however, of a major complicating factor: the language is spoken in an area (Than-Uyên, Thuân-Châu) well south of the China border and, along with the anticipated Vietnamese loans, displays marked influence from the neighboring White Tai and related languages, e.g., in KP the numerals above 'four' have been borrowed from Tai. This has yielded two lexical layers, an earlier Kadai-level along with a later Tai-level, yielding a variety of reflexes, with many problems still awaiting solution.

1.   *Consonants.*

The Laha consonants are presented in Table 1.

p	pl	ph	phl	b		m	ml	v/w
t		th		d	s	n	l	
c						ñ		y~z
k	kl	kh	khl			ŋ		
?					h			

Table 1

Initial v- is in complementary distribution with final -w; z- is a free variant of y- and is apparently earlier in some forms (see 'rain' under 9).

The consonantal pattern is of the Tai type, perhaps showing Tai influence, and the historical development is also similar, including *?b- >

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[1]   For a list of language, reference, and other abbreviations, see the Appendix. [Ed.]

b-, *ʔd- > d- [d-]; also *ʔdz- > z- via *dz- (in 'rain'). Post-velars merged with velars, with both *kh- and *q(h)- (= PT *x-) > kh-, but *G- (= PT *ɣ-) > k- vs. *g- > kh-. The latter parallels *b- > ph- and *d- > th-, with p- or t- reflexes seemingly pointing to Tai loans, e.g., pa⁶ 'carry on back', PT *ba (A2/B2). Note c- for *j- in ca¹ 'rough', PT *ja (A2) and the variation shown by the following:

(1) Laha saw¹ 'early', PT *jaw (A2)
(2) Laha sɛ⁵ 'male/man', SW/C-Tai (SW/CT) *jaay (A2) ~ NT *saay (A1)
(3) Laha caak⁴ 'pestle', PT *saak
(4) Laha cot⁴ 'tail', NT *cot 'end', SWT sut 'end', Buyang šut⁴⁴ 'tail'.

Note also s- for *z-:

(5) Laha sɨ² 'straight/erect', PT *zɨ (C2).

Both p- and ph- show ties with PT *f- ~ *v-, with v- for PT *w-; also Laha h- corresponds to PT initial *r-, while Laha -l- corresponds to PT medial *-r-.

2.   *Vowels.*

The Laha vowels are shown in Table 2.

u	ɨ	i	uə	ɨə	iə
o	ə	e		əɨ	
ɔ	a	ɛ			
	aa				

Table 2

This is essentially the basic Tai pattern, with diphthongs maintained but with a length distinction only for /a/. The actual rimes, however, tend to be idiosyncratic, with -əy appearing at times for an anticipated *-i, -əw for *-u or *-aw, as well as -ow for *-aw.

3. *Labial clusters/dyads.* [2]

For dyads, the anticipated forms with medial -1- are found:

(6) Laha p l ə ŋ[6] 'leech', PT *p-l i ŋ (A1)
(7) Laha p l ɔ k[4] 'bracelet', PT *p-l ɔ ɔ k 'ring, band'
(8) Laha b l a[2] 'fish', PT *p-l a (A1)[3]
(9) Laha ph l ə ŋ[6] 'bee', PT *ph-r ɨ ŋ (B1)
(10) Laha ph l ɛ w[4] 'sweep', PT *phɛ w (B1) 'sweep, clean' (see Li 1977), for *ph-r ɛ w (B1).[4] Here disambiguating cognates are lacking; Laha plays a key role.
(11) Laha ph l aat[1] 'slip/slide', PT *b-l aat 'slip and fall'.

Note Laha ph l - for a secondary cluster (as opposed to a dyad) in the following:

(12) Laha ph l a[6] 'knife', PT *b r a (B2) 'knife (dao), sword' (possibly an early loan).

Note also:

(13) Laha p l aat[4] 'blood', PT *l ɨ at[5].

For PAT/PKD-level clusters (see the Table in Benedict 1991; also Benedict 1990a:75), the Laha reflexes vary:

(14) PAT/PKD *p r > Laha /t/ (ta[3] 'eye')
(15) PAT/PKD *p l > Laha /ph/ (ph ə n[5] 'die' ~ ph ə n[2] 'kill')
(see under 9)
(16) PAT/PKD *p l̥ > Laha /p/ (p aa l[3] 'forest')
(17) PAT/PKD *b r (preglottalized) > Laha /d/ (d ə p 'unripe/raw')
(18) PAT/PKD *b l̥ > Laha /th/ via *d (th ə w[4] 'ashes').

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[2] For the distinction between 'clusters' and 'dyads' (the latter reflecting disyllabic proto-types) see Benedict 1989a.
[3] Note the Laha voiced initial.
[4] For various reasons, Benedict and Li Fang Kuei use the symbols B and C for opposite tonal categories of Proto-Tai: Benedict's "B" corresponds to Li's "C" (written with *máaj thoo* in Siamese), while Benedict's "C" corresponds to Li's "B" (written with *máaj ʔɛ̀ek*). This word 'sweep' is particularly confusing in this respect: as the Siamese spelling แผ้ว *phɛ̂w* shows, this word belongs to Li's Tone *C1, and is so marked in the text of Li 1977 (p. 64); however, in the Index to Li 1977 (p. 354) it is erroneously cited as "B1." [Ed.]
[5] See Benedict 1989b.

4. *Final −1.*

See my forthcoming paper on Saek in *Comparative Kadai II* for details of comparisons with Saek −1 as well as White Sand Li −1.

5. *Tones.*

Laha has three high tones (including one glottalized: indicated by an underline, 55) and three low tones, with the following correspondences with Tai tones (*B/C = *C/B of F. K. Li; the numerals in the chart refer to the number of examples found for each Laha/PT tonal correspondence). See Table 3.

PTai \ Laha	1 /55/	2 /55/	3 /53/	4 /22/	5 /21/	6 /14/
A1	2	11	23	26	11	8
A2	14	12	4	--	2	--
B1	3	--	4	9	5	21
B2	8	--	5	--	--	1
C1	1	1	6	8	10	5
C2	4	4	3	1	--	--

Table 3

Tone 5 shows some association with aspiration (initials: stop + h, h−, s−), especially for A1. There is only one exception:

(19) Laha nɔŋ[5] 'pond', PT *hnɔɔŋ (A1).

Syllables with *voiced initials and stopped finals (PTai Tone *D2) correspond to Laha Tone 1 /55/, while stopped syllables with *voiceless initials (PTai Tone *D1) correspond to Laha Tone 4 /22/, with a very consistent pattern, allowing, e.g., khot[1] 'curved/crooked', to be grouped with PT *got 'bent, winding', rather than with PT *khot 'coil' ~ 'bent/curved'. Laha parallels Be in the tonal flipflop here; note also that, unlike Tai, the glottalized tone here (2) is completely dissociated from tone *B and linked rather with *A; this again parallels Be, where tone 1 ("low-rising legato tone with very conspicuous laryngeal constriction towards the

end of the syllable"[6]) closely corresponds to PT *A1. Note also that the high-level Be tone 2 corresponds to PT *A2, again a tonal flipflop.

6. *Prefixed k-.*

This element occurs occasionally, usually with nouns, and is much commoner in Pubiao (qa-) and in Pupeo, rare in Laqua (Bonifacy 1905). Its pattern of occurrence is markedly irregular, e.g., for 'eye' only in the Than-Uyên (TU) dialect of Laha (kəta). Lati/Laji has ʔa- in a similar role; cf. Laha kdəy³ 'tiger', Lati a-ti, Laji ʔa-te³⁵. The source in most if not all instances appears to be the ubiquitous (AN/KD/MY/Jp) PAT *q(a)- ~ (unstressed) *k(ă)- prefix (ATLC:147), reflected elsewhere in KD at times by either ʔ- or 'high' (< *surd initial) tone:

(20) Laha kdən³ 'nape of neck' ~ kədən³ 'occiput'; cf. NT (Buyi) *ʔdən (BI) 'nape'; PKD *ʔdən (BI) 'neck'

(21) Laha kmaaŋ¹ 'devil'; PKS *maaŋ (A1) 'ghost/spirit'.

In this second root, however, Tai exhibits variation between the *k- prefix and the *ʔu- marker (see Benedict 1988):

(22) SWT *hmaaŋ (A1) < *ʔmaaŋ (A1) 'imaginary evil spirit supposed to live on fish' (Ahom) ~ '[bedevil:] make imprecations against, curse; shame' ~ NT *mʷaaŋ (A2) 'ghost/spirit' (through vocalic transfer [VT]),

while Hlai reflects a destressed (*ʔu- > ʔə-) version:

(23) P-Hlai *ʔmɨaŋ⁴ '[bedeviler:] sorcerer' (through VT).

Compare the following pair of roots:

(24) PAT *ʔalak > PAN and PKD *(ʔu-)alak 'child' (Jp. ʋara- < *u-ala[k]); PKS *1aak (D2) and Laha laak¹ (through VT, without prefixation); SW/CT *luuk (D2) ~ (via destressing) *ʔlɨɨk (D2) (Lao only) ~ NT *ʔlɨk (D2), all < *ʔu- marked; P-Hlai *ʔlɨak (cf. 'sorcerer')

(25) PAT/PAN *(qa-) [1,ḷ]ima 'hand; five'; PKD *(qa-)lima, with *1- reflected via metathesis in KD only in the doublet "five" series (Gelao: Duoluo group ml- forms). 'Hand' is represented

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by SW/CT *mɨ < *mya (A2) (through VT) and Laha ma² , both unprefixed; PKS *mya (A1/A2), reflecting variable *q- prefixation; Pubiao qa-hmi²¹³, P-Hlai *meɨ¹, with prefixed kɨ- (Jiamao) ~ ɨ- < *ŭ- (Tongshen).

Before -l- there is merging with velar + -l- clusters:

(26) Laha kluŋ² 'star'; cf. Pupeo kaluoŋ, Pubiao qəluəŋ³³, but Laqua (Bonifacy 1905) luŋ

(27) Laha kləy³ 'float; flow'; cf. PT *hl(u)ay (A1) 'flow'

(28) Laha klaal³ 'grandchild' ⋈ *laal³ '[child of bow:] arrow' (note TB parallels), both reflecting *ka- through VT. Cf. Be lo¹ < *hlaal(A1) 'lad' (with VT) ~ lan¹ < *hlal (A1) 'grandchild' (without VT); P-Hlai *[l/ʔl]a:l '(small) child'; PT *hlaan (A1) 'grandchild'; PKS *khla:n (A1) 'grandchild'; Lakkia khya:n (A1) 'grandchild'; Gelao (Wanzi) klu¹ 'grandchild', from *klaalᴬ; cf. su¹ 'rice' (gloss from comparative list in Chen 1984), PKD (Tai/Laha) *saalᴬ '(husked) rice', itself a VT form: cf. PAN (Paiwanic) *qasal '(husked/unhusked) rice'; the KD root here is a partially reduplicated derivative of PAT-level *lah(-lah); cf. Saisiyat (Paiwanic) oläh < *ulah, with the *ʔu- marker commonly employed with younger-than-Ego kin terms, for 'grandchild'.

Laha khl- represents an earlier cluster/dyad rather than the *k- prefix, notably in khla² 'ear', PKS *khra (A1), despite the related NT *rɨa (A2) (see Benedict 1989c, pp. 3-4).

7. *Prefixed* *m-.

The Kala-Phlao dialect of Laha has this only in mna⁵ 'tomorrow' and four faunal terms. It is more prominent in the Than-Uyên dialect, in 'moon', 'earth', '(head) hair', 'bird' (manok, looking strangely like PAN *manuk < PAT *mamrok; PKD *mrok), 'egg', 'sugarcane'; also for k- in 'star' (məluŋ), paralleling BB mluoŋ. This prefix is typical for Lati/Laji and is also found in Buyang; it appears to be a KD innovation.

8. *Infixed* -n-.

This occurs only in mal¹ 'fat/grease/oil', mnal¹ 'fat/stout', from *m-l-al¹ through dissimilation. Compare PT *mal (A2) (Haudricourt 1963

cites /mal²/ for Saek) 'fat/grease/oil; greasy, oily'; PKS *man (A2) 'fat/grease/oil'; also the infixed derivatives: P-Gelao *m-lan²ᐟ⁶ < *m-l- al²ᐟ⁶: Duoluo (Liuzhi) mlaŋ¹ᐟ² 'fat/grease/oil', Kelao (Bonifacy 1905) nuə 'oil' ~ nu (compounded with 'pig') 'fat/grease'; Aou (Pudi) miaŋ⁵ᐟ⁶ 'sesame [oil] (taste)'; Gao (Wanzi) nan² 'fat/grease/oil; fat/stout'; Buyang nen⁴⁴, Pubiao nin³³ 'fat/stout'; Laqua nen 'fat/grease' (Bonifacy 1905); Lati mnə 'oil' ~ (compounded with 'pig') 'fat/grease' (ibid.); cf. PAN (Formosan/Philippines) *simaɣ 'fat/grease (animal)'. Infixed *-l- is well attested in AN and there is other evidence for it within KD, notably in Gelao forms for 'tooth', 'dream', and 'year' (see Benedict 1990b).

9.   *Forms of special interest.*

Laha presents a number of forms of special interest, including one numeral, three pronominals/deictics, as well as several items with final -1 and a pair of cultural/historical import:

(29) 'six': Then-Uyên (TU) dram (KP has a Tai loan), labeled "enigmatic" (ATLC:188) but apparently reflecting an earlier *nram < *mram < *mlam; Gelao has *ml-: Longjia mlaŋ¹ᐟ² ~ Pudi miaŋ¹ᐟ² (both Aou), Qinglong (Hagei ñaŋ², Wanzi (Gao) nan¹, supporting the reconstruction of PAT-level *ʔumləm, indicated now also by Formosan as well as Japanese.

(30) 'I': ɔ³ 'first singular', from *uaw, with regular -ɔ < *-wa(a)w, as in kɔ⁶ 'scratch'; cf. Saek khwaaw (A2), from an earlier *ʔu- a[g]u < *ʔu-aku < PAT *(ʔu-,ʔi-)aku (see Benedict 1990b). This form, paralleling in AN the Central MP development, e.g., Niala (Ceram) wau, provides the only evidence to date for the use of the *ʔu- marker for this pronoun in KD.

(31) 'second singular': ma¹; cf. Buyang ma⁴⁴, Lakkia (Lk.) ma² 'second singular', pointing to an underlying person-oriented ('you there') deictic in KD (see Benedict 1993), in view of the apparent relationship to P-Hlai *ma⁵ 'that (far)'; PAT-level *(ʔi-)ma(-n) 'that/3rd p. prn.' (see Benedict 1988:336).

(32) 'that': ña³, matching Buyang ña⁴⁴, Pubiao ña⁴⁵; cf. PAN *-ña '3rd p. prn.' (enclitic), supporting the reconstruction of *ña along with *na at the PAT level, *contra* the suggested (in ATLC:406) *ña < *na + iya. However, *ʔña < *ʔi-na is suggested by the probably "high" tone, in Laha mostly corresponding to PT *A1 (see 5), and at this point can hardly be ruled out.

(33) 'flower': baal² < *ʔbaal², from *q-baal (see 6) < *q-ba[ŋ]al (note KD parallels for medial *-ŋ- > Ø in ATLC:169); PAT *baŋal: P-Paiwan (Form.) vaŋal 'fruit' ~ 'flower'; Jp. hana, Old Jp. Fana 'flower'. Hlai: Jiamao ŋɨa¹ 'flower', from *SYL + ŋa (with VT), may also belong here, with parallels for *-a < *-al (see 4), along with P-Gelao *hnaʋ³ 'flower', also from *SYL + ŋa (regular *-aʋ < *-a), but final −n is anticipated here (analysis incomplete) and there is an alternative etymology for both the Hlai and Gelao forms, from PAT *(m)buŋah (ATLC:294-5), which inter alia yielded Laqua, Pupeo puŋ, Pubiao puŋ²² 'flower'.

(34) 'mouth': Laha mul¹, BB muol, TU mɔn, from PKD *(qa-)mul: Pubiao qəmən⁴⁵, Pupeo kəmən, Laqua mon (Bonifacy 1905) ~ ka-mu (Laji); PAN *muḻut 'mouth'. Compare also *muḻmuḻ > PMP *mulmul '[mouthe:] put into the mouth and suck' (Blust); note that the *qa- prefix here has 'shaped' the development: *qa-muḻut > *qa-mul[ut].

(35) 'cheek': piŋ³ < PKD *ʔ(m)piŋ: P-Hlai biŋ⁵ 'buttocks' (cf. Khamti kɛm 'cheek', kɛm kon = kon 'buttocks'); PAN-level *(qa-)piŋ(piŋ) 'cheek': Cebuano ʔapiŋ, N. Phil. ʔapiŋ ~ piŋpiŋ; for apparently related forms see Benedict 1990a:174.

(36) 'deaf': ŋal³, TU ŋan, BB kaŋan < PKD *ŋal: P-Gelao *ŋan⁴; cf. PMP *bəŋəl 'deaf', from PAN-level *bəŋəl. There are parallels for the indicated shift in AN from *bəŋaḻ through assimilation to V₁.

(37) 'yellow': Laha ŋil³, from PKD *(ʔ)ŋiil; Laqua nin < *ŋin (through assimilation); P-Gelao *ʔñi⁴ᐟ⁶ < *ʔŋi⁴ᐟ⁶ through assimilation (for *-l > Ø, cf. 'flower'); Lati a-hni (written an hi; cf. Gelao); also Saek ŋiil (Cl/B2) '[sthg. yellow] turmeric'; cf. Germ. Gelbwurz; also PMP *kuniŋ 'yellow'/*kunij 'turmeric' ~ (Chamic) 'yellow', from PAN *kuli(ñ)jaŋ (Siraya [Form.] kuliaŋ) < PAT id. Without the nasal increment (ñ) this root yielded PT *hlɨaŋ (Al) < *ʔlɨaŋ (through *u > /ə/ destressing followed by VT), P-Hlai *(ʔ)lyaŋ¹ᐟ⁴. Without the /ñ/, it yielded PMP *kunij (regular *-l- > /n/; typical AN "drift towards disyllabism" [Blust]) as well as the above KD forms. With the ñ it yielded PMP *kuniŋ (PMP lacks -ñ) and perhaps the above root through metathesis: *kuliñjaŋ > *kuliŋ > *ʔliŋ > *ʔŋil (Saek length secondary). As anticipated, Japanese reflects SYL-I: ki < *kï < *kui < *ku[l]i[jaŋ].

(38) *'die'* ~ *'kill'*: Laha phən⁵ ~ phən², the only pair of this kind cited for Laha. Compare P-Gelao *plən¹ 'die': Gao (Wanzi) pen¹; Duoluo (Liuzhi) plan¹ ~ Kelao ple[n] (Bonifacy 1905) cites ple u, apparently a script misreading for *plen); Lati phi, Man P'ang pien, Ban Phung pe 'die', Laji phī⁵⁵ 'die', Lachi (unpublished word list by Nguyen Van Huy) pè 'die' ~ pì 'kill'; also Laqua and Pupeo tie, Pubiao tie⁵³ 'die'; also PT *praay (A1) (VT form, reflecting *[m]a-) 'die'; PKS *pray (A1) (without VT) 'die'; Lk. plei (A1) 'die'; Be dai¹ 'die' < *tay (A1). This etymon is apparently unrepresented in Hlai while Buyang piaŋ⁴² 'kill' looks like a "look-alike." These are the KD representatives of PAT *ma-play 'die' ~ *pa-play 'kill' > PAN *ma-Cay 'die' ~ *pa-Cay 'kill' ~ (especially MP) 'die' ~ 'end'; Jp. hate- 'end, die'; PMY *dayᶜ 'die' ~ *tayᶜ 'kill'. The Laha/Gelao/Lati nasal-final (*-ən or the like) presents a problem; note that both Laha and Lachi have maintained the morphophonemic distinction between 'die' and 'kill'. Lachi pè 'die' ~ pì 'kill' supplies the vital clue here, the related Lati and Laji forms indicating that /pè/ reflects the simple root-final *-ay, whereas /pì/ reflects a nasal suffix of the *-ən type. Surely this is to be identified with the PAT/PAN *-ən goal- or object-focus marker, represented also in the KD forms for 'eat', from *(ma-)kaʔ(-ən) (Benedict 1988:334-5). As such, it qualifies as a 'kill' marker; it would seem that with the loss of *ma- vs. *pa- through syllabic reduction, the *-ən suffix came into use to mark 'kill', followed by partial merging with 'die', with *ma- vs. *pa- making for the Laha tonal difference.

(39) *'steam rice'*: pul⁴ < PKD *(ʔ)(m)pul; cf. White Tai bun (A1) 'incomplete cooking of rice (by steam), making it into a paste'; the most likely AN cognate has *b-: P-Phil. (Zorc) *buɣbuɣ 'cook wet rice'. Whatever the AT status, an early (Archaic) loan to Chinese is in evidence; cf. 餴 (GSR-438e) pi̯wən/pi̯uən 'steam rice' (Shijing cit.); for the final, cf. PTB *pur ~ *pir 'fly'; 飛 (GSR-580a) pi̯wər/pywe̯i 'fly' ~ 翻 (GSR-471f) pi̯wən/pi̯uən 'soar, fly' (see STC:172 for the doublet, regularly < *-ur ~ *-ul).

(40) *'needle'*: bli², from *ʔbli < PAT *(ʔu-)(m)baliq via partial reduplication: *ʔbali[-baliq]; Jp. hari < *bali[q] 'needle' (regular shifts).
On both the mainland and offshore, as iron replaced bone, the meaning also shifted via 'sthg. iron' to 'iron', as in the following:

(41) AN: Formosan (Atayal/Paiwanic) *(m)baliq (also 'nail')

(42) KD: NT *mwa(A2) < *mbwa (regular shift) < *u-mba[liq]
(through VT)
SW/CT *hlek < *[bali]q-liq (through VT and typical
*-iak > -ek leveling)
PKS *khlet (with *-k > -t assimilation) (KD has *-k for
*-q, which is lacking)
Lakkia khyãk < *khlyãk < *m-khliak (through VT,
without leveling; typical Lk. secondary nasalization)

(43) Early loans:
Tib. lcags < *hlyak-s (regular shift; -s for loans)
鐵 (GSR-1256b) *xliat/t'iet (regular shifts; *-k > -t
assimilation)
PMY *hḷiaʔ (regular *-ʔ for *-q or *-k, both lacking in
PMY)

(44) Later loan:
Jinghpaw phri3 (low tone) < *phli (Jg. lacks phl-) <
*bli (cf. Laha shift)
Note: Jg. has other, relatively early loans from KD, distinct
from the obvious later loans from Tai (see Benedict,
forthcoming)

(45) Parallel: P-Tibeto-Karen *(s-)kap 'needle' (Wr. Tib. khab), P-
Karen *thaʔ (< *skap) 'needle' → 'iron' (see Benedict
1987, Table 5).

APPENDIX

Abbreviations

AN	Austronesian	NT	Northern Tai
ATLC	See Benedict 1975.	PAN	Proto-Austronesian
BB	Ban Bung	PAT	Proto-Austro-Tai
	(dialect of Laha)	PKD	Proto-Kadai
CT	Central Tai	PKS	Proto-Kam-Sui
GSR	See Karlgren 1957.	PMP	Proto-Malayo-
HCT	See Li 1977.		Polynesian
Jg	Jinghpaw	PT	Proto-Tai
Jp	Japanese	P-Phil	Proto-Philippine
KD	Kadai	STC	See Benedict 1972.
KP	Khla Phlao	SWT	Southwest Tai
	(dialect of Laha)	TB	Tibeto-Burman
Lk	Lakkia	Tib	Tibetan
MP	Malayo-Polynesian	TU	Than-Uyên
MY	Miao-Yao		(dialect of Laha)
	(=Hmong-Mien)	VT	vocalic transfer

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