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PREFIX T- IN OLD CHINESE

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Chinese forms will be cited according to the formula:

modern standard Chinese [character] *Old Chinese > Middle Chinese 'gloss'

Example: *tun*₁ 涸 *^at-khur > thwon 'to vomit'

Modern Standard Chinese: pin-yin transcription

Old Chinese (OC): ca. 500 BCE, reconstruction follows Baxter (1992) with emendations in Sagart (1993 and forthcoming)

Middle Chinese (MC): ca. 580 CE. Forms are given in Baxter's notation (Baxter 1992)

1. why reconstruct a prefix t- ?

1.1.1 phonetic series contacts involving *t(h)- and initials other than alveolar stops

*tun*₁ 涸 *^at-khur > thwon 'to vomit' (phonetic is *jun*₁ 君 *^bkur > kjun)

1.1.2 interchange between characters apparently showing MC reflexes of OC initial *t(h)- and characters with MC initials reflecting other OC initials

*wei*₂ 惟 唯 t-wi[j] ~ tə-wi[j] > ywij 'to be' [the OC copula], often written epigraphically by *zhui*₁ 隹 *^btu[j] > tsywj 'dove' (this is also an instance of phonetic series contact)

1.1.3 word-family contacts between words showing MC reflexes of OC *t(h)- and words with MC initials reflecting other OC initials

*dan*₁ 湛 *^at-lim > tom 'sunk in, steeped in' (sc. pleasure): *yin*₂ 淫 *^blim > yim 'to soak; excess; licentious'

*zhi*₄ 躓 *^btr-lit-s > trjijH 'to stumble' : *die*₁ 跌 *^alit > det 'to stumble'

*zhi*₄ 寔? *^bt-lit-s > tejH 'stem of a fruit' : *die*₂ 颯 *^alit > det 'stem' (of a gourd)

*he*₂ 合 *^agip > hop 'to join, unite; to answer': *da*₂ 答 *^at-gip > top¹ 'to respond, answer' (this is also an instance of phonetic series contact)

¹ Or possibly *^at-lip > top, as there is some evidence that *he*₂ 𠄎 includes a root lip (*^ag-lip > hop)

1.1.4 double readings

*zhe*₂ 熱 *^bt-nip > tsyip and *^anip > nep, both readings: ‘immobile’

*zhe*₂ 輒 *^at-nep > tep ‘immobile’ and *^bnrep > nrjep ‘legs sticking together, unable to walk’

*pou*₄ 𠵼 *^at-phu > thuw and *^aphu-s > phuwH, both readings: ‘to spit’

*zhou*₁ 鬻 *^bt-luk > tsyuwk ‘gruel’ and *^bluk > yuwk ‘to nourish’

*gan*₁ 飪 *^bt-kan > tsyen and *^bkan > kjon ‘gruel’

2. The functions of *t-

2.1 in verbs

2.1.1 intransitives

stative verbs

*zhi*₄ 質 *^bt-lit > tsyit ‘real, solid, good faith’ (compare *shi*₂ 實 *^bm-lit > zyt ‘solid’);

*di*₄ 的 *^at-lewk > tek ‘bright, brilliant’ and *zhuo*₂ 灼 *^bt-lewk > tsyak ‘burn; brilliant; illuminate; brightly’ (with root root *lewk ‘bright, brilliant’, as in *zhuo*₂ 濯 *^alrewk > dræwk ‘brilliant, fine’, *yao*₄ 瀑 *^blewk-s > yewH ‘shine, brightness’)

*zhuang*₄ 戇 *^atr-ŋoŋ-s > traewngH and *^ahŋoŋ-s > xuwngH (two readings, both:) ‘stupid’ (root initial ŋ- is indicated by modern dialects: Hakka, Min);

*dan*₁ 湛 *^at-lim > tom ‘sunk in, steeped in’ (sc. pleasure, cf. section 1)

*zhe*₂ 熱 *^bt-nip > tsyip ‘immobile’; *zhe*₂ 輒 *^at-nep > tep ‘immobile’ (cf. section 1)

*zhe*₂ 懾 *^bt-nep > tsyep ‘despondent, to fear’ (n- indicated by phonetic series)

color terms

chi 赤 *^bt-hlak > tsyhek ‘red’ (lateral root initial indicated by phonetic series contact)

*chu*₄ 絀 *^btr-kut > trwit ‘deep red’ (velar root initial cf. *chu*₁ 出 below)

actions or functions of the body

*hui*₄ 喙 *^bt-hloj-s > tsyhwejH² ‘to pant’ (*Shi Jing*, Ode 237). root initial hl- indicated by phonetic series.

*tun*₁ 涸 *^at-khur > thwon ‘to vomit’ (cf. section 1)

*pou*₄ 𠵼 *^at-phu > thuw ‘to spit’ (cf. section 1)

other intransitives

*zhan*₃ 輾 *^btr-nan? > trjenX ‘to roll over’. Root initial n- indicated by phonetic series and word-family connection

*zhi*₄ 躓 *^btr-lit-s > trjijH ‘to stumble’ (cf. above, section 1)

*chu*₁ 出 *^bt-khut > tsyhwit ‘to go out’ (velar root initial indicated by phonetic series contact and word-family connection)

*wei*₂ 惟唯 *^bt-wij ~ *^btə-wij > ywij ‘to be’ [the copula] (cf. above, section 1)

² Another reading is *^bq-hloj-s > xjwejH (same meaning).

2.1.2 residue

- *du*₄ 斃 *^at-lak-s > tuH ‘to destroy’

Shi Jing: Da Ya, Ode 258 *Yun Han*, 2nd stanza (Karlgren’s translation):

*Hou*₄ *Ji*₄ *bu*₄ *ke*₄ 后稷不克 ‘Lord Millet is powerless’
*Shang*₄ *Di*₄ *bu*₄ *lin*₂ 上帝不臨 And God on High does not favour us
*hao*₄ *du*₄ *xia*₄ *tu*₃ 耗斃下土 He wastes and **destroys** the earth below’

- *da*₂ 答 *^at-gip > top ‘to respond’ is characterized as a transitive verb by Schuessler (1987: 107)
- In Early Zhou texts *zhuo*₂ 酌 *^bt-lewk ‘to pour with a ladle’ sometimes occurs as a one-argument intransitive ‘to be served drinks’ (Ode 223) and in other instances with a second argument, which designates the vessel or body of liquid (such as a pool) *out of which* liquid is being ladled (*Shi Jing*, Ode 3; Ode 251), or the person *to whom* liquid is ladled (Ode 250). In one case (Ode 220) Karlgren gives a transitive translation:

酌彼康爵

*zhuo*₂ *bi*₃ *kang*₁ *jue*₂

pour with ladle-that-rest-cup
they fill that cup of rest

The meaning is obscure.

2.2 in nouns

2.2.1 mass nouns

*zhou*₁ 鬻 (and 粥) *^bt-luk > tsyuwk ‘gruel’ (lateral root initial indicated by second reading and word-family connection)

*gan*₁ 𪛗 *^bt-kan > tsyen ‘gruel’ (velar root initial indicated by phonetic series and second reading)

*zhi*₄ 質 *^bt-lit-s > tsyijH ‘good faith; substance’

*dan*₃ 膽 *^at-lam? > tamX ‘gall’

*chen*₃ 潘 *^t-hljim? > tsyhimX ‘a liquid’

2.2.2 count nouns

*zhi*₄ 寔 ?*^at-lit-s > tejH ‘stem of a fruit’ (cf. section 1 above)

*zhou*₃ 肘 *^btr-ku? > trjuwX ‘elbow’ (to account for the graphic similarity of the early graph for this word with *jiu*₃ 九 *^bku? > kjuwX ‘nine’)

2.2.3 kin terms

*zhong*₁ 公 [1189a] *^bt-koŋ > tsyowng ‘husband’s elder brother or father’ (compare *gong*₁ 公 [1173a] *^akoŋ > kuwng ‘father; prince’).

Two referential kinship terms in the modern Minnan dialect (Xiamen): *ta*₃₃-*kuã*₄₄ ‘husband’s father’ (*kuã*₄₄ = *guan*₁ 官 ‘official, mandarin’) and *ta*₃₃-*ke*₄₄ ‘husband’s mother’, have prefix *ta*₃₃. Tung (1993) argued that prefix *ta*- goes back to a Yue 越 substratum in Minnan.

2.3 Unclear if noun or verb *duo*₃ 髻 [11j] *^at-lojʔ > twaX (pron. acc. to *Jing Dian Shi Wen*) ‘cutting of the hair of a young child three months of age before presentation to the father’ (*Li Ji, Nei Ze* 20). Again GSR 11 is a lateral series and a prefix *t- is needed to explain the occurrence of initial t- in it. The word-base is perhaps *duo*₄ 墮 [11e] *^alojʔ > dwaX ‘to fall’.

*zhi*₄ 錐 *^bt-rit > trit ‘harvesting knife’ (though the word may originally have meant ‘to harvest’, as proposed by Karlgren)

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