How dull can you get?: buttock and heel in Sino-Tibetan

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As I was deep into the revisions of the "nether regions" of Chapter Four ("The Outer Body") of Volume I (Body-part Terminology) of the Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus (STEDT) recently—i.e., the LOWER BACK / HIPS / BUTTOCKS / LOINS area—the outlines of a new Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) and Proto-Sino-Tibetan (PST) etymon began to emerge. It quickly became apparent that the semantic ramifications of this root extend well beyond the buttocks in the narrow sense. One of the more interesting of these associations involves, oxymoronically enough, the concept of dullness.

1.0 *-tun ≠ *-tin BUTTOCK / HEEL / DULL

1.1 BUTTOCK

First, a couple of words for buttock in Kamarupan languages:

Meithei məθun

Abor-Miri ko-dun

A highly probable cognate in a Central Loloish language, Lisu, demonstrates that this is a general TB root:

Lisu kʰi²¹ du²¹ 'buttock'

The first syllable here means 'excrement' (< PTB *klay: STC #125), though this is no objection to maintaining that the core meaning of the second syllable is 'buttocks' and not 'anus'. The first syllable is merely a metonymic clue to the general anatonical area. (Analogously, the original meaning of the Lahu word qʰê-qʰo, literally "shit-hole", must obviously have been 'anus', but it has long since been generalized to mean 'buttocks; rear end', and now even neologically to refer to the rear of a car or the tail of an airplane.)

1 In order to avoid cluttering this little paper with references, the sources of most cited forms are not indicated. They are all to be found in the STEDT database.

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Jingpho has an obviously related form, but with -i- vocalism, and a sibilant prefix (rather than a nasal one as in Meithei):

Jingpho  ᵇʰōtʰín 'buttocks'

This -u- × -i- alternation is one of the best-attested variational patterns in Tibeto-Burman.²

A cognate immediately suggests itself on the Chinese side: the first syllable of Mandarin tūn-bù 'buttocks'³:

舷 or 臀 [GSR 429b-c] OC *d’wɔn / MC ɗ’uan / [Baxter] OC *dɔn

尾 [GSR 429a]⁵ OC *d’wɔn / MC ɗ’uan / [Baxter] OC *dɔn

Also probably related is this morpheme from the same phonetic series:

殿 [GSR 429d] OC *tian / MC tien- / [Baxter] OC *dɔn

'rear (of an army)'⁶

If these two Chinese morphemes are indeed allofams, it is interesting to note that Karlgren’s reconstructions make it look as if Chinese displays the same back/front (or labialized/palatalized) vowel alternation in this root as does TB: while Baxter, not recognizing prelabialized vowels or a medial *-i- in Division IV, reconstructs an invariant Old Chinese rhyme for all the characters in this group. Be that as it may, the case for cognacy with the TB forms cited above and below seems strong, both phonologically and semantically.

We have thus set up this root for PTB/PST as STEDT Etymon #3335, with the following pan-allofamic formula (PAF):

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³ Benedict once suggested to me (p.c., 1977) that this Chinese morpheme was related to PTB *s-tu 'vulva' (no doubt with the "collective suffix" *-n) [STC, notes 284, 428], though this seems entirely fanciful.
⁴ The notation for reconstructed OC forms used here is slightly different from that of Baxter 1999, reflecting some modifications he made during his visit to the STEDT project (April-May, 1995). The rhyme reconstructed here as *-s’n was "*-t’n" in Baxter 1992.
⁵ GSR remarks that there are no text examples of this character, but Shuwen defines it as 'buttocks', thus taking it to be the primary form of 429b-c, the character that supplanted it at an early date. The graph seems to have been a drawing of a man sitting on a stool.
⁶ The meaning 'palace; half' is post-Han.
1.2 HEEL

This is by no means the end of the story, however. A compound in Wancho (Northern Naga) leads to a rather unexpected semantic association with another bodypart:

Wancho chi-dun 'heel' (chi 'foot').

A moment's reflection shows this to be a totally natural association, based on similarity of shape and relative position.\(^7\) A heel is to the foot what the buttocks are to the trunk of the body:

HEEL : FOOT :: BUTTOCKS : BODY.\(^8\)

Formations similar to the Wancho compound occur with the meaning 'heel' in several branches of TB, where our etymon #3335 appears almost always with -u- vocalism; but the key language Jingpho provides evidence also for the variant in -i-.

1.21 Forms for 'heel' with -u- vocalism

_Naga:_

Wancho  
\textit{chi-dun}

Khōzha  
\textit{šū-dō}

_Tujia (unclassified):_

Tujia  
\textit{tɕi}^{21} \textit{tʰʊ}^{21}

_Loloish:_

Phunoi\(^9\)  
\textit{pi}^{33}\textit{tun}^{11}

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\(^7\) See the taxonomy of bodypart metonymies in Matisoff 1978 (VSTB). pp. 179-193.

\(^8\) Although the English word heel is primarily used of our lower extremities, it is also applicable by extension to the fleshy rounded base of the palm, the heel of the hand. Cf. the discussion of Lahu lâz-\textit{mz}-cu/cwi ~ lâz-\textit{nž}-cu/cwi 'elbow' ('hand-tail', below, note 19).

\(^9\) For the first syllable see BEHIND/HEEL (4.0 below).
West Himalayish:

Pattani\(^{10}\)  \(\text{thu-ri}\)

**Tani:**\(^{11}\)

Apatani  \(\text{lu-du}\)
Miri  \(\text{lu-du}\)
Bengni\(^ {12}\)  \(\text{lu-duk}\)
Padam-Mising  \(\text{le-du}\)
Bokar  \(\text{li-tu} \sim \text{li-du}\)
Idu  \(\text{bru-du}\)

1.22 The Jingpho forms with -i- vocalism

The Jingpho words \(\text{šatīn} \) ‘buttock’ (above) and \(\text{lothīn} \) ‘heel’ stand in an obvious allophonic relationship. Furthermore, for once we can plausibly derive each of these two prefixes from a full morphemic prototype: the \(\text{šo-} \) of \(\text{šatīn} \) certainly looks like a reduction of PTB \(*\text{syā} \) ‘flesh; meat; animal’ (i.e. “the fleshy \(\text{tīn} \)’); while the \(\text{lo-} \) of \(\text{lothīn} \) is clearly a reduced form of PTB \(*\text{lak} \) ‘hand’, which is frequently prefixed to Jingpho nouns referring to the limbs, or verbs referring to action with the hands or feet (i.e. “the \(\text{tīn} \) of the limb”).\(^{13}\)

Several Himalayish languages have words for ‘heel’ with first syllables that bear a resemblance to this Jingpho form (Kulung and Thulung \(\text{din-di-ri} \), Khaling \(\text{dhīn-di-ri} \) but these are immediately suspect as loans from Nepali because of their virtually identical polysyllabic shapes.\(^ {14}\)

\(^{10}\) This is the only form I have found where the reflex of our etymon is not the last syllable of its compound. It is perhaps a loan from Indo-Aryan (see below 1.22).

\(^{11}\) See J. T.-S. Sun 1993.

\(^{12}\) Most of these Tani forms seem to reflect Proto-Tani \(*\text{du} \), though the root is not explicitly reconstructed in Sun 1993. Only the Bengni form suggests an original final consonant, which may have been \(*\text{dental} \) rather than \(*\text{velar} \), since PTani \(*\text{tun} \) regularly became Bengni \(-\text{un} \) (Sun 1993, Section 2.4.2). If the velarity of this Bengni form is probative (i.e. is taken to reflect a genuine Proto-Tani variant with final velar), it should perhaps be assigned to \(*\text{tun} \) (2.0 below). The first element in these compounds is nearly identical to the words for ‘foot’ in the various languages, reconstructed by Sun as Proto-Tani \(*\text{lo} \) or \(*\text{le} \).

\(^{13}\) See Matisoff 1969:187; and STC:106-107, and note 308 (p. 110). Note the Jingpho generalization of \(\text{HAND} \) to \(\text{LIMB} \) in general. The Jg. word for ‘foot; leg’ itself (\(\text{lōdō} \)) has this prefix. (A fuller expression for ‘heel’ is \(\text{lāgō \text{lothīn} \) literally “foot-heel”). Among many other examples that could be cited are \(\text{lōphā} \) ‘palm’; \(\text{lāthēk} \) ‘pluck; flick with a finger’; \(\text{lōphūt} \) ‘knee’; \(\text{lōkhāt} \) ‘kick’, etc.

\(^{14}\) Boyd Michailovsky (p.c. July 1995) feels that the Khaling voiced aspirate is not necessarily a proof of Indo-Aryan origin, since such articulations freely creep into native TB lexical items in
1.3 DULL

Further reflection on the commonalities between buttocks and heels reveals that they share a faceless, blunt, and rounded nature. They are in fact among our dullest bodyparts, in every sense of the word. That suggests that we examine the Chinese word for dull. Sure enough, though it belongs graphically in a different xiéshèng series from buttock, the ordinary Mandarin word for dull (dùn) has exactly the same reconstruction (except for tone) in OC/MC:

\[ 'dull' \quad 鈍 \quad [\text{GSR 427i}] \quad \text{OC } *d'\text{wan} / \text{MC } d'\text{uon}-\]
\[ \quad \text{Mandarin } dùn \]

Both English and Chinese have metaphorically transferred the concept of DULL from the physical realm (“not sharp, as a knife”) to the mental (“dull-witted”). Nowadays the notion of BUTT END is itself directly connected to the mental realm in English slang expressions like butthead, i.e. “stupid fool”. Our word buttock is from the same word-family as butt (dull end; the larger or thicker end of something):

\[ \text{PIE } *\text{bhau- } \text{‘strike’ } > \text{PGmc } *\text{bautan } (\text{Eng. } \text{beat}) \approx *\text{butaz } (\text{Old Norse } \text{bútr}
\quad \text{‘cut-off tree stump, log, block of wood’ } > \text{Old English diminutive form } \text{buttuce}
\quad \text{‘end, strip of land’}^{15} > \text{buttock}). \]

\[ \quad \]

\[ \quad \]

In the next two sections (§2.0 and §3.0) we briefly consider two other groups of forms that bear a prima facie phonosemantic resemblance to the \( *\text{-tin} \approx *\text{-tun} \) etymon, but which for the moment we must consider to be etymologically distinct. Then we discuss two other etyma that figure in compounds for ‘heel’, one of which seems basically to mean behind (§4.0), and the other tail (§5.0), before offering some concluding remarks (§6.0).

\[ ^{15} \text{ Cf. French cul } \text{‘butt, rear end, ass’ and cul de sac } \text{‘dead-end road’}. \]
2.0 HEEL/SWELLING

\textit{\textasteriskcentered r-ti\textin{\textdagger}} \overset{?}{\cong} \textit{\textasteriskcentered r-tu\textin{\textdagger}} \overset{?}{\cong} \textit{\textasteriskcentered t-ti\textin{\textdagger}}

Before the \textit{\textasteriskcentered t-ti\textin{\textdagger}} \overset{?}{\cong} \textit{\textasteriskcentered t-tu\textin{\textdagger}} etymon had ever come into focus, I had set up a root for 'heel' of the shape \textit{\textasteriskcentered r-ti\textin{\textdagger}/n} (STEDT Etymon #394), on the basis of Written Tibetan \textit{rth\textin{\textdagger}-pa}, \textit{phyi-rth\textin{\textdagger}} and Jingpho \textit{lath\textin{\textdagger}n} (cited above 1.22). It now seems preferable to take the difference in the positions of articulation of the final consonants more seriously, and to keep the forms in \textit{n} separate from those in \textit{\textdagger}, especially in view of a possible Chinese cognate to the latter (below 2.23).

There also appears to be a difference in the semantic center of gravity: \textit{\textasteriskcentered t-tu\textin{\textdagger}} \overset{?}{\cong} \textit{\textasteriskcentered t-ti\textin{\textdagger}} seems basically to mean 'buttock', and 'heel' only in compounds; whereas the forms with final velars never mean 'buttock', but only 'heel' (perhaps also 'swell; swollen' if we admit the Chinese forms cited below as cognate).

Even among reflexes with final velar nasals, some groups of forms have front vowels, while others have non-front ones, perhaps justifying the positing of \textit{-u-} \overset{?}{\times} \textit{-i-} variation here also, yielding a reconstruction like \textit{\textasteriskcentered r-ti\textin{\textdagger}} \overset{?}{\cong} \textit{\textasteriskcentered r-tu\textin{\textdagger}}.

Some uncertainty therefore remains. This is a classic dilemma when working in a language family where the details of phonological evolution are still poorly understood -- do we lump or do we split? It is often the better part of valor to have recourse to STEDT's "is-it-an-allofam?" symbol "\textasteriskcentered ?\textdagger?":

\begin{center}
A \textasteriskcentered ?\textdagger? B \quad "is A allofamically related to B?"
\end{center}

2.1 With front vowel

Written Tibetan \textit{rth\textin{\textdagger}-pa}, \textit{phyi-rth\textin{\textdagger}}

The semantic core of these compounds is \textit{rth\textin{\textdagger}} (-\textit{pa} is a meaningless suffix; for \textit{phyi} see 4.0 below). The liquid prefix makes the comparison with Jingpho \textit{lath\textin{\textdagger}n} attractive (above 2.0). However, although the Tibetan words for 'hand' (\textit{lag-pa}) and 'foot' (\textit{rkang-pa}) both begin with liquids, neither prefixal \textit{l-} nor \textit{r-} seems to be particularly associated with the limbs in WT (unlike Jingpho, 1.22 above). The prefixes in the two languages could thus have developed independently.
Other Himalayish languages have cognates with similar vocalism:

Tsangla (C. Monpa)  bi-ting-pa
Hayu  kō:-ten
Gurung  tī-juq

2.2 With non-front vowel

It remains to be seen whether the following groups of forms are allofamically related to the above Himalayish set:

2.21 Lolo-Burmese

Hpun  pā-t(h)āŋ
Bisui  pā-tŋ̃ tsiŋ
Ugong  phoʔ-th̪ŋ̃

2.22 Kamarupan forms with affricate initials and velar finals

Miji  lai-cuŋ-khu
Geman Deng  pla₅₅ dzon₅₅
Darang Deng  grō-ťi; gion₅₃
Ao  nok-la-chang
Garo  ja'-kin-chok

2.23 Chinese HEEL/SWOLLEN

There is a Chinese word for ‘heel’ that has been perfectly homophonous since the Old Chinese period with a lexeme that means ‘tumor; swell; swollen’. Both belong to the same xiesheng series [GSR #1188]:


腫 [GSR 1188f] ‘heel’ OC *tjung/*MC *tsjwong-/*Mand. zhōng\textsuperscript{16}
腫 [GSR 1188e] ‘tumor; swell; swollen’ OC id./MC. id./Mand. id.

Semantically the connection is highly plausible -- the heel is the fleshy, rounded, “swollen” part of the foot. Phonologically, the OC reconstructed form, with its palatalized initial plus back vowel, incorporates both front and non-front elements, similar to the front- and non-front vowelled allofams suggested for its putative TB cognates.

3.0 HEEL *tsu ?X? *-tun

A number of forms in various subgroups of TB seem to reflect an etymon for 'heel' with affricate initial and -u vocalism, with little evidence of any final consonant. This morpheme almost always occurs as the last constituent in compounds

\textit{Kamarupan:}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Angami \quad \text{phi}-tsu
  \item Sema \quad \text{a}-pi-\textit{tsǔ”}
  \item Sangtam \quad \textit{thsǔ}-za\textsuperscript{17}
  \item Milang \quad \text{bya}-\text{\textit{jyu}}
  \item Rongmei \quad \text{phai}-\text{\textit{cum}}
  \item Zeme \quad \text{mi}-\text{\textit{pi-me-sui}}
\end{itemize}

\textit{Himalayish:}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Gurung \quad \text{tī}-\text{\textit{juq}}
  \item Tamang (Risiangku?) \quad \text{chju:}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{16} The OC reconstructions of these morphemes are very similar in the systems of Li Fang Kuei (*tjung) and Baxter (*tjung).
\textsuperscript{17} -za is perhaps a diminutive morpheme from PTB *(d)za ‘child’. For a general discussion of ST diminutive suffixes, see Matisoff 1995.
Loloish:

Lahu  
\[ kʰt\text{-}m̥\text{-}cu \sim kʰt\text{-}ŋɛ\text{-}cu \]  
'heel'

\[ ləʔ\text{-}m̥\text{-}cu \sim ləʔ\text{-}ŋɛ\text{-}cu \]  
'elbow'

Yi (Xide)  
\[ cŋ3^{nd}zi3^{nd}bŋ2^{nd}\text{-}zw3^{nt} \]

Despite the similarity of these forms to the root set up as *-tun (above §1) -- and the ease with which one could concoct a pan-allophonic formula like *t(s)u-N -- it seems wiser for now to adopt a more conservative course, and set up a separate root *tsu. Yet the final nasal in the Rongmei form phai-cum causes a final twinge of doubt!

It is unlikely that the Lahu syllable cu derives from a prototype with *u- plus-final-nasal, since such rhymes give Lahu mid vowels (PLB *-um > Lh. -e; *-un > Lh. -ɛ; *-un > Lh. -ə). Note that the Lahu formations for 'heel' and 'elbow' are exactly parallel; there is also a compound qho-cu 'hill; peak', with what looks like the same final element. This suggests that in Lahu at any rate, this lexeme is functioning as a frozen formative in a few compounds that have to do with "routed objects that come to a sort of point".

4.0 BEHIND/HEEL (*pay) and FOOT (*pey)

Many compounds for 'heel' in TB languages contain a first element with labial stop initial and front vowel, which look at first glance as if they are all related. A closer look reveals that two quite separate etyma are involved: (a) one (provisionally reconstructed as PTB *pay) meaning 'behind; hindpart', as exemplified in Tibetan and other Himalayish languages; (b) the other meaning

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18 For the second syllables, see below §5.0. Each of these forms has a variant with the diminutive palatal suffix \[ kʰt\text{-}m̥\text{-}cwɨ \sim kʰt\text{-}ŋɛ\text{-}cwɨ, ləʔ\text{-}m̥\text{-}cwɨ \sim ləʔ\text{-}ŋɛ\text{-}cwɨ \]. For an extensive discussion of this diminutive element, see Matisoff 1995. The last syllable of the Zeme form just cited may reflect a similar -i suffix.

19 The Proto-Loloish rhyme *-un was quite rare in any case; the only good Lahu cognate of a WB form in -un is 'powder': WB (h)mun 'be small, minute', (h)mun 'powder', (h)mun 'fine dust'; Lahu mo ~ m3 'powder'.

20 This seems a bit strange to English speakers, for whom, I would venture to say, the part of the leg that is analogous to the elbow is the knee, since they are both joints that articulate the large proximal and distal segments of their respective limbs. It seems that in TB the knee is felt rather to be parallel to the shoulder.
'foot/leg' (PTB *pey), and found principally in Kamarupan (perhaps also in Lolo-Burmese).

4.1 BEHIND/HEEL (PTB *pey)

There is no doubt that the first syllable of one of the Written Tibetan compounds for 'heel' mentioned above (2.0), phyi-rtiṅ, means 'behind; after; outside' (Jäschke:348-350). An analogous formation is WT phyi-sder 'spur of birds' (alongside sder(-mo) 'claw; talon'), which literally means "rear claw", not *"foot-claw". A couple of other Himalayish forms for 'heel' evidently contain the same morpheme:

Tsangla  \( \textit{bi-ting-pa}^{22} \)

Tamang (Sahu)  \( \textit{\textquotesingle pai-ta-la} /'\text{is a tonemark}/ \)

4.2 FOOT (*pey)

An etypon of similar shape meaning 'foot/leg' is attested mostly in Kamarupan (*pey: STEDT Etyon #343), where it also occurs as the first root element in compounds for 'heel':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOT</th>
<th>HEEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angami</td>
<td>phi-zhe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeme</td>
<td>mi-pi-dei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liangmei</td>
<td>cha-phi-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongmei</td>
<td>phai--ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rengma</td>
<td>mpha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangkhul</td>
<td>phei</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{21}\) For a similar association between 'heel' and 'backside', cf. Mandarin jiāo-hǒu-gēn 'heel' (hǒu 'back').

\(^{22}\) This form seems to combine all the morphemes in the two WT compounds phyi-rtiṅ and rtiṅ-pa. To my knowledge there does not exist a WT trisyllabic compound *phyi-rtiṅ-pa.

\(^{23}\) mi- is a prefix which occurs with Zeme (and Mzeme) bodypart terms.

\(^{24}\) Note the similarity between the last elements in the Rengma and Tangkhul forms.
Lakher phei *phe-nga-va hmao-thy

Cf. also Kezhama *phe, Khoirao *phaï, Chokri *phe\(^{31}\) ka\(^{35}\), Mao *o-phi (all meaning 'foot'); Khôzha *phe-žû 'foot', *e-phe 'leg'; and Sema a-\(\text{pi}\)-tsû, Milang bya-\(\text{y}u\) 'heel'.

4.3 Lolo-Burmese forms

Also possibly reflecting this root for 'foot' are morphemes in the compounds of a couple of LB words for 'heel':

Phunoi \(pi^{33}\ tun^{11}\) 'heel'

Yi (Xide) \(cį^{33}\ ndzi^{55}\ bu^{21-33}\) 'heel'

(Cf. also Lisu *hpi\(^2\)-\(\text{ye}\) 'leg'.)

This morpheme also possibly underlies the unstressed syllables in these LB compounds for 'heel':

Written Burmese *pha-hn̥n̥ and *pha-kraï

Hpun \(pä-t(h)än\)

Bisu \(pä-tän tsïn\)

Ugong \(pha?-thyn\)

The conundrums posed here by the existence of two phonologically similar roots in the same general semantic area well illustrate how tricky it is to compare etyma across subgroups of the vast Tibeto-Burman family.

5.0 HEEL and TAIL

Finally, a number of compounds for 'heel' in Loloish, Tujia, and Qiangic languages contain a morpheme which looks allofamically related to the well-

\(^{25}\) WB hn̥n̥' already means 'back side', so the prefix might well mean FOOT here.
established but vocalically irregular PST etymon for 'tail', set up as PTB *r-may (STC #282).

Loloish:  
Proto-Loloish *ʔmya² ≠ *ʔnya²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lahu</td>
<td>kh+-mē-cu²⁶ ~ kh+-ŋē-cu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lolopho</td>
<td>tchi³³ mæ⁵⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasu</td>
<td>ñgʰy³⁵ mi³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nesu</td>
<td>gy²: ni³³ me³³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tujiia:  
a²¹ dži²¹ mue⁵⁵ kʰwe²¹
/a²¹ dži²¹ means 'foot'/

Qiangic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ergong</td>
<td>me³³ sam³³ ²⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shixing</td>
<td>kho⁵⁵–mi³³–ci³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiang (Mawo)</td>
<td>rmiæ -si</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gyarong</td>
<td>ta-mæ-qʰo, ta-mE-kʰu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daofu</td>
<td>ma lhuë</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²⁶ The italicized syllable is perfectly homophonous with the root of the Lahu word for 'tail', Lahu mē-tu, but this root presents many difficulties in Lolo-Burmese (see GSTC #72). In addition, there is the problem of the variant -ŋē-, as well as the fact that the Lahu word for ELBOW is an identical formation, with lâʔ 'hand' instead of kh+-foot': lâʔ-mē-cu/cwi ~ lâʔ-ŋē-cu/cwi (see note 18). Of course the elbow could be conceived of as the "arm-tail", or the elbow compounds could have been formed by analogy with the heel ones.

²⁷ The last syllables of the Ergong, Shixing, and Mawo forms perhaps derive from another new etymon *t)sam, reflected also by: E. Gyarong sam–sam [which syllable is cognate?]; Muya mō³³so²⁵; Dimasa ya-sing-so. Cf. also a couple of forms with stop initials: Chang yo-tam. Limbu lāŋko ki tham-bā.
Maybe also these Kamarupan syllables:

Tangkhul \( \text{phei mə-cha} \)

Zeme \( \text{mi-pi-me-sui} \)\(^{28}\)

6.0 Summary and semantic flowcharts

This little paper has certainly not covered even the relatively narrow semantic field of buttocks and heels in anything like exhaustive fashion. Several promising new roots have not been mentioned at all, e.g. Proto-Kamarupan \( *\text{N-kon} \) ‘heel’: Lotha \( \text{n-khong} \), Kom Rem \( \text{ke makbɔn} \) (ke ‘foot’), Moyon \( \text{khi-bəkhɔn} \) (khi ‘foot’).\(^{29}\)

Even so, we have discussed a number of new PTB etyma in this area, several of which have solid Chinese cognates, including basic lexemes for buttock, dull, and heel. These etymologies illustrate the importance of discovering valid patterns of semantic associations in ST compounds and word families, as well as the crucial importance of TB data for the proper interpretation of the Chinese lexicon. The problem, as always, is knowing where and when to stop in positing allofamic relationships -- there are so many traps along the way, and so many gaps in the present state of our knowledge!

This whole discussion may be viewed as a preview of the sort of food for thought that will be provided once Volume I of STEDT has appeared. New etymological discoveries are being made all the time, but it sometimes seems as if every “solution” carries within it the seeds of new problems. As the proverb says, \( \text{Oyf ilian terets ken men gefinen a naye kashe} \) ("For every answer one can find a new question").

The following "metastatic flowchart" summarizes the semantic interrelationships touched on in this paper.\(^{30}\)

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\(^{28}\) As noted above (n. 21), the first syllable of the Zeme form is a general body-part prefix, ultimately derived from \( \text{*mi-n} \) ‘person’. Cf. the similar prefix in Magari, and STC, p. 119.

\(^{29}\) Perhaps Bunun (West Himalayish) \( \text{kon-tsi} \) also belongs in this set.

\(^{30}\) The conventions for interpreting these charts are explained in Matisoff 1978, passim. In principle it should be possible eventually to map all of semantic space. Such an enterprise might be called the Human Semome Project.
Figure 1. Metastatic Flowchart

swelling → HEEL

FOOT  BEHIND  ELBOW

FOOT  butt end  FOOT  TAIL

blunt  dull  dull
(not sharp)  (mentally slow)
REFERENCES


