

# TONE CHANGE IN NORTHERN LALO

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Even as the sense of urgency grows over endangered language documentation, many Ngwi (Loloish) languages in southwestern China are dying before we are aware of them (Bradley, 2007). This paper presents new data on the Northern Lalo group, a cluster of previously unknown, endangered Central Ngwi languages spoken in western Yunnan. Earlier research on Lalo focused exclusively on one variety spoken in southern Dali prefecture, and Lalo was thought to have little internal diversity (Björverud, 1998; Chen et al., 1985). But recent fieldwork, including the collection of wordlists and texts in over 20 villages, reveals that the communities who affiliate under the Lalo autonym show a striking, albeit fragile, linguistic diversity. This paper, the first linguistic treatment of Northern Lalo languages, accounts for the diachronic tonal developments that distinguish Northern Lalo from other Lalo languages.

While classic models of tonogenesis (Haudricourt, 1954; Matisoff, 1973) and Thurgood's (2002) revision are well-attested and phonetically plausible (Hombert et al., 1979), secondary tone change is less well understood. Pittayaporn's (2007) proposal of mechanisms that govern secondary tone change, such as segment-tone interaction, is borne out by Northern Lalo tonal development. In Tone \*1 (Bradley, 1979), voiced prevocalic consonants lowered the tonal onset but not the offset, conditioning a low rising tone, as Pittayaporn's segment-tone interaction predicts. The development of Northern Lalo's rising contour tone highlights a key difference between tone-splitting and original tonogenesis that has not been fully addressed in the literature. In original tonogenesis, prevocalic consonants are never the cause of contour tones. But Northern Lalo shows that, in a secondary tone change, voiced prevocalic consonants can cause a rising contour shape. Northern Lalo tone changes are explained in terms of Ohala's (2003) phonetically-based historical phonology, and Flemming's (2004) Dispersion Theory which holds that phonological contrasts tend to be maximally distinct.

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