

A *a/a* Nucleus in Old Chinese Syllables as Evinced by a New Derivational Dictionary

Pulleyblank's (1963:207-14; 1977-8) proposal for a *a/a* nucleus in Old Chinese (OC) struggles to provide a convincing account for palatal and labial features in certain syllable types. Furthermore, the *a/a* alternation, supposedly typologically comparable to the sweeping *e/o* ablaut of Proto-Indo-European (PIE), has only ever been presented in select examples without any attempt to tackle the OC lexicon on a larger scale.

Following in the footsteps of Tōdō's *Kanji Gogen Jiten* 漢字語源辭典 (1965), while adopting a methodological approach inspired by Boltz's (1994:96) observation that PIE word families can often provide typological semantic support for putative OC word families, a new "Derivational Dictionary of Chinese and Japanese Characters" is currently being compiled. This dictionary better identifies OC word families by combining palaeographical analysis, hitherto largely ignored in OC reconstructions, with a modified version of Pulleyblank's vision for OC phonology.

The dictionary also notably adopts Pulleyblank's (1994, 2001:27-32) further proposal for contrastive moraic weight across the OC syllable via a typological comparison with the Kuki-Chin languages of the Burma-India border area. Such a proposal is validated by a better understanding of the prosodic structure of these languages which is ultimately suggestive of a *a/a* analysis for Proto-Sino-Tibetan as a whole.