Sources of vowel alternation in Kiranti verbs

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Apophony, or vowel alternation, has been described in verb stems of several languages of the Kiranti group. I will review these cases and show that they appear to fall into two broad categories. In the first, which I described in my 1975 analysis of Bahing and Khaling — here extended to Dumi — apophony appears as the result of harmony with suffix vowels, with further influence from stem-final consonants (velar vs non-velar). This type of apophony has a clear phonological motivation and does not require reconstruction to Proto-Kiranti. A second type affects a larger number of Kiranti languages, in a small number of verbs which can be reconstructed with open stems: *dza 'eat', *pa 'weave', *ta 'put', *sa 'accompany' are widespread examples. I will examine to what extent this apophony in open stems can be shown to have arisen from causes traceable inside Kiranti, such as (1) harmony or umlaut and (2) coalescence of stem and suffix vowels, and whether there is an unexplained residue that might fruitfully be compared with such phenomena in Jyarong, Tibetan, and other Tibeto-Burman groups.