

Making the STEDT project sustainable: plans for an international consortium and collaboratory

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ABSTRACT

The *Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus* project (STEDT) has been going on since 1987, supported jointly by the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project has grown in size and sophistication simultaneously with the development of computer technology. Our main lexical database now comprises some half a million items from over 250 Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects. A number of ancillary databases contain tens of thousands of additional lexemes from individual Sino-Tibetan languages (e.g. Chinese, Tibetan, Burmese, Lahu). The STEDT database of reconstructed roots includes about 2500 items. Many of these have been published in works like the *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman: System and Philosophy of Sino-Tibetan Reconstruction* (2003), but a great many more remain to be revised and polished before publication.

I have been Principal Investigator of STEDT since its inception, but now is the time to attempt to ensure that the project will continue in some form after I have left the scene. To this end, NEH has provided us with the funds to hire a "sustainability consultant" (2008-09), who has helped us formulate a plan for the future.

This plan has two major components. First, the establishment of an international consortium of individuals and institutions who would be willing to help keep the project going financially. Secondly, the creation of a "collaboratory" of scholars who would be interested in helping to formulate, revise, criticize, and/or approve new candidates for addition to the list of "official" reconstructed roots. (I have jocularly referred to this process as the Root Canal.)

In this talk, I will go into some more details about this plan, as well as soliciting suggestions for improvements from our colleagues.