

**REVIEW OF A *STUDY OF THE BIAO LANGUAGE*  
标话研究 [*Biāohuà Yánjiū*], BY LIANG MIN AND  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This is one of the series *Zhōngguó Xīnfāxiàn Yǔyān Yánjiū Cóngshū* (*Newly-discovered Languages of China*), edited by Sun Hongkai. See the review of the overall series by Thurgood and Li (2003), and reviews of some individual books in the series by Handel (2003, 2004), in this journal.

The book describes a hitherto undescribed language of the Kadai family. By Kadai I mean the genetic grouping including Tai, Kam-Sui, Hlai, Gelao, and other languages such as Laha, Lachi, Pubiao, Buyang, and so on. This grouping has also been called Tai-Kadai, Daic, and, more recently, Kra-Tai (Ostapirat 2000). In Chinese the name is either Dong-Tai or Zhuang-Dong (*dòng* is the Chinese word for Kam, and *zhuàng* refers to the speakers of Northern Tai and Central Tai languages who live in the Guangxi province).

The authors are well-known senior linguists with much experience studying this family, particularly the Kam-Sui languages. They have previously published two works that deal with the Biao language. Zhang (1989) is an article specifically discussing Biao's genetic affiliation; Liang and Zhang (1996) is a book on the Kadai family that includes Biao among the languages compared.

Biao is spoken by 60–70,000 people in Huáijí 怀集 County, northwestern Guangdong province. Although the speakers of Biao are officially classified as belonging to the Han ethnicity, the Biao language clearly belongs to the Kadai family. A few examples will give an immediate hint to anyone familiar with the family: *ma*<sup>3</sup> ‘dog’, *na:m*<sup>4</sup> ‘water’, *pɛ*<sup>1</sup> ‘year’. Biao’s location makes it an outlier on the southeast margin of the Kadai-speaking area.

The book’s main sections are:

- I. Introduction
- II. Phonology
- III. Lexicon
- IV. Grammar
- V. Comparison of Biao with other Kadai languages and the question of its genetic affiliation
- VI. Appendix: wordlist and texts

The book generally follows the format that is standard for Chinese descriptions of minority languages of China, with the addition of a strong historical/comparative bent. Substantial parts of Sections I and III, and all of V, are devoted to comparing Biao with other Kadai languages and subgroups. Other sections contain many passing statements that the feature being described is (or less often is not) similar to the corresponding feature in other Kadai languages.

Accordingly, the remainder of this review is divided into two sections, the first on the synchronic description of Biao and the second on the diachronic/genetic study.

## 1. THE SYNCHRONIC DESCRIPTION

### *1.1 Introduction*

The introduction situates the language and its speakers, linguistically and in other ways. The authors sketch the location of Biao both in terms of geography (hilly, forested, karst) and of neighbouring ethnicities and languages (mostly Han, small numbers of Zhuang and Yao; all of these speak the local Yue dialect of Chinese, which is called Baihua as it is in other areas of Guangxi). There is also a substantial amount of ethnographic information (about 26 pages), covering such topics as kinship, religious practices, material culture and art.

In addition to the synchronic context, the authors also present a sketch of the history of the Kadai language family, tracing its division into subgroups and the travels of its speakers. This history is in fairly specific and concrete terms, e.g.

The ancestors of the Dai, Tai, Lao, and Shan probably moved west continuously because of reasons including the war and disorder following the Han dynasty, successively arriving in [what is now] northern Thailand and Burma's Shan state, later dispersing to [what is now] central and southern Thailand, Assam in India, and the Sipsongpanna and Dehong areas of China... (p.4)

There is some variation among local varieties of Biao, but mutual intelligibility is high. Biao speakers use Biao among themselves, both within their own village and when interacting with Biao speakers from other villages. Schooling formerly used the local Yue (Chinese) dialect but now uses Putonghua. The authors do not say whether Biao is currently the first language learned by Biao children.

## ***1.2 Phonology***

Biao phonology is described purely in terms of the full syllable. In many respects it is typical of languages in its area and genetic grouping.

Obstruents contrast in aspiration; there are no voiced obstruents, glottalized obstruents, or obstruent/lateral initial clusters; there are no voiceless sonorants. There is a contrast of /θ/ and /s/.

The vowel system is /i e ε a: a ɔ o œ ø u y/. Vowel length is contrastive for /a/ only. All other vowels are phonetically long except for /e/, which along with short /a/ occurs in closed syllables only. There is a full set of final consonants / p t k m n ŋ j (written 'i') w (written 'u')/. There are also syllabic bilabial and velar nasals.

There are six tones in unchecked syllables and four in checked syllables. Tones are notated in the way that is standard for Chinese descriptions of Kadai languages, with numerals 1-10, even numbers for tones conditioned by previously voiced initials (sometimes called the low series) and odd numbers conditioned by all other initial types (the high series). Tones 1 and 2 are the reflexes of proto-tone A,

corresponding to Middle Chinese level (*píng*) tone<sup>1</sup>. 3 and 4 are the reflexes of the proto-tone corresponding to Chinese rising (*shàng*), tone C in Li's (1977) proto-Tai reconstruction. 5 and 6 are the reflexes of the proto-tone corresponding to Chinese departing (*qù*) tone, tone B in Li's proto-Tai reconstruction. 7 and above are the tones that developed in formerly atonal checked syllables. See the Introductions to Edmondson and Solnit (1988) and Edmondson and Solnit (1997) for discussion of tonal notation practices in Kadai linguistics.

The tones are described purely in terms of pitch, with no mention of any associated voice quality features. This is somewhat unusual: Kadai languages, like others of this area, very commonly have at least one tone that has some nonmodal voice quality associated with it. The split producing the two tone series (odd-numbered versus even-numbered in the notation) is a simple two-way voicing-conditioned split, with no conditioning by initial aspiration or glottalization. The 'high' series 1 3 5 7 9 is in fact relatively higher in pitch than the 'low' series 2 4 6 8 10. Similarly the high-series tones merge to mid-level in sandhi with a following syllable, while the low-series tones merge to low-level in this environment.

Biao includes a great many Chinese loanwords, more than is usual among Kadai languages; not a surprise given its outlier location. The authors define an older and newer layer of loans, with the layers distinguished in two ways. First, the older borrowings tend to be monosyllabic while the new borrowings tend to be polysyllabic. Second, there is an exchange of tonal reflexes between the categories derived from proto-tones A and B. See Table 1 (the choice between Biao odd-numbered and even-numbered tone depends on the initial voicing of the Chinese source).

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the quite regular correspondence in tonal category between Tai and Chinese (also between Kam-Sui and Chinese) in the many words that are cognate between those two linguistic groups. Whether this group of cognate words is borrowed or inherited is of course an independent matter.

<i>Chinese tone</i>	<i>Biao tone: older loans</i>	<i>Biao tone: later loans</i>
A	1, 2	3,4
B	3, 4	1, 2

*Table 1: Biao Tones in Borrowings from Chinese*

Independently of these two layers of loans, Biao has a traditional reading pronunciation of Chinese characters. In this it resembles Zhuang and a number of other Kadai languages of the Guangxi-Guizhou area. Besides being used when reading written Chinese (aloud), it is used in folk songs, proverbs, aphorisms, elaborate expressions and other types of elegant diction. It is evidently a type of Sino-xenic, similar to Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, and Sino-Vietnamese. As such it is both an actual and a potential source of loanwords, making for a complicated situation. For example, the authors tell us the following:

- The phonology of the reading pronunciation is like that of the old loans except that it has the A/B tone interchange of the new loans.
- The newer loans mostly use the reading pronunciation.

This leaves undescribed the phonological characteristics of the minority of newer loans that do not use the reading pronunciation. Do they resemble standard Cantonese, or perhaps Mandarin?

The reader may also wonder, concerning the many Biao words with Chinese affinities, how the authors decide that some, such as *tsham*<sup>1</sup> ‘needle’ and *kiu*<sup>6</sup> ‘bridge’ (both on p.46), are old borrowings, while others, such as *kyŋ*<sup>3</sup> ‘ginger’ (p.70) and *ka:r*<sup>5</sup> ‘chicken’ (p.71), are inherited from proto-Kadai. Perhaps the authors have delineated some criteria for this distinction, but they do not divulge them.

There is a section on phonological variation among local varieties of Biao. The differences are not great. One difference of interest is that there is much disagreement between dialects on aspiration of voiceless obstruents. This echoes the difficulty in finding regular correspondences involving aspiration between languages in other branches of Kadai.

### 1.3 Vocabulary

Biao words may be simple, derived or compound. Simple words are mostly monosyllabic, but polysyllables exist as well. Polysyllabic simple words occur both with phonological parallelistic structure (i.e. reduplication, alliteration or rhyme), as in *khap<sup>7</sup> ηap<sup>7</sup>* ‘solitary’, and without it, as in *ha<sup>6</sup> lo<sup>5</sup>* ‘head’.

Derived words may be either prefixed or suffixed. The authors list ten prefixes and four suffixes and provide examples of each. The affixes are full syllables, in many cases relatable to independent words. An example is *liak<sup>8</sup>* which means ‘child’ as an independent word but ‘small’ in words such as *tsij<sup>4</sup> liak<sup>8</sup>* ‘small jar’. This particular extension of meaning is of course quite common, for this same etymon elsewhere in Kadai and for words of this meaning in other languages.

Compound words have various structures, such as coordination, modification, subject-predicate, and so on.

A large section (about 35 pages) is titled *Biǎohuà cíhuìde láiyuan* ‘Origins of the Biao vocabulary’, but what it really does is investigate the lexical correspondences between Biao and other Kadai, so I treat it in Part 2 of this review.

### 1.4 Grammar

This section is divided into sections on word classes, phrases and sentences.

The word class system is the standard one in use by Chinese linguists, which has a preference for splitting over lumping: adjectives are separated from verbs, and classifiers are separated from nouns.

Word order is generally SVO. When a verb is followed by both an object and a complement (e.g. a directional or result expression), verb-object-complement order is more common, but verb-complement-object is also possible. Similarly, with ditransitive verbs, the recipient (goal) and goods (patient/theme) arguments can follow the verb in either order. Although the authors describe noun constructions and classifier constructions separately, it is possible to generalize as follows:

- Numerals, pronouns, nouns and nominalized verbal expressions (my interpretation of verbal expression followed by the particle  $k\varepsilon^6$ ) precede the head.
- Adjectives and ordinal numbers follow the head.

When a pronoun modifies a noun other than a kinship term, there must usually be an intervening classifier or demonstrative, as in  $mu^2\ to^5\ ha:i^4$  ‘you+CLF.pairs+shoe: your (pair of) shoes’.

There are two sets of demonstratives, evidently related etymologically but different in grammatical behavior. Set A (my label) is  $na:i^4$  ‘this’ and  $mu:i^4$  ‘that’; set B is  $na^2$  ‘this’ and  $m\alpha^5$  ‘that’. Set A can stand alone as the subject or object of a clause while set B cannot. Set A are preposed when modifying nominals (my term for noun, classifier or classifier phrase), while set B are postposed. This suggests to me that set A are demonstrative pronouns while set B are demonstrative adjectives. One complication is that a nominal can also be modified by both at once. The authors state that the two sets are identical in meaning.

There is a relatively short section describing types of phrases. They are modification, verb-object, coordination, complement (eat-full, return-come), verb serialization (go-market buy-groceries) and pivot (tell-you-return).

The sentence is defined as (1) having a pause, (2) having a definite intonation, and (3) expressing relatively complete meaning.

Sentences are further classified in several ways. One distinction is single-part (subject or predicate only) versus double-part (both subject and predicate present). Some single-part examples are  $tsia^1$  ‘me’ (as a response to *who’s knocking at the door?*); and  $poi^1\ tshan^5\ hu^3$  ‘going to market’ (as a response to *Where are you going, Uncle?*).

Another distinction is between simple and complex sentences. The former include sentences with embedded attributive clauses. The latter are clause sequences, with glosses like *this one is yours, that one is mine* (coordination) and *because the road is narrow, therefore the vehicle can’t get through* (subordination).

The description of syntax is not extensive. Much of it consists of fairly perfunctory lists of types (of phrase, of sentence), each with two or three examples. There is little discussion of how the types interact.

For instance, as an example of a complement construction we have *ir<sup>5</sup> naŋ<sup>1</sup>* ‘return+come: come back’ (p.119). As an example of a pivot construction we have *a<sup>1</sup>ma<sup>5</sup> tshiam<sup>5</sup> mu<sup>2</sup> ir<sup>5</sup> poi<sup>1</sup>* ‘mama+call+you+return+go ‘Mama tells you to go back’. This example shows that a complement construction like *ir<sup>5</sup> poi<sup>1</sup>* ‘go back’ can function as the second verbal constituent of a pivot construction. But the authors do not explicitly say this, nor do they provide an inventory of any other ways in which the various construction types can be constituents of each other.

### 1.5 Wordlist and Texts

The wordlist occupies 113 pages. It is in the form of Biao glosses of Chinese words. Since one Biao word may gloss multiple Chinese words, it is not easy to calculate how many Biao words the wordlist contains. For example, the two items ‘love (one’s child)’ and ‘love (to watch opera)’ are both glossed with the single Biao word *oŋ<sup>5</sup>*. In any case, it is a substantial quantity of lexical data, although it should be said that there is no information provided about the Biao word other than that it translates the Chinese word. For example, the Chinese classifier *bǎ* is translated as Biao *tsham<sup>1</sup>* when counting chopsticks, *kauf<sup>6</sup>* when counting hoes, and *tsi<sup>3</sup>* when counting knives. What other nouns does each of these classifiers count? We may hunt elsewhere in the wordlist and discover that *tsi<sup>3</sup>* also counts pens, but there is clearly more that could be known about the syntactic and semantic scope of this lexical item.

The texts consist of four folksongs and three narratives. Each has interlinear glosses and is followed by a running translation.

## 2. THE DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

This topic is covered in Chapter 3 part 3 ‘Origins of the Biao vocabulary’ and in Chapter 5 ‘A Comparison of Biao with Other Kadai and the Question of Its Affiliation’. The authors compare Biao with other Kadai languages in terms of phonology, lexicon and grammar.

The range of languages compared is quite extensive. Below is a list of all of the Kadai languages that the authors cite in one connection or another.

Southwestern Tai: Siamese, Lao, Tai Lue, Tai Neua, Yuanjiang

Central Tai: Longzhou, Yongning

Northern Tai: Wuming, Laibin

Kam-Sui: Kam, Sui, Maonan, Mulam, Ai-Cham, Mak

Hlai: variety unspecified, probably Baoding

Other: Lingao (Be dialect), Qiongshan (Be dialect), Lakkia

For clarity, several points should be noted here:

- The authors consider the Kadai family to have four branches: Tai, Kam-Sui, Hlai and Ge-Yang, with the last-mentioned including Gelao, Lachi, Laha and a number of other languages. The authors do not cite any of the Ge-Yang languages in their comparison. They do not explain this but one can guess that it is because of the relatively scanty material available, and perhaps even more because of the relative difficulty of identifying cognates in these more divergent languages.
- The authors do not name the sources of the data that they cite. Presumably they are mostly from published sources, but one language clearly is not: the Lakkia forms the authors cite have palatal or alveopalatal initials where the published source (Mao, Meng & Deng 1982) has velars followed by palatal glide. For example, ‘wine’ is *chau*<sup>3</sup> in the work under review, but *khja:u*<sup>3</sup> in Mao, Meng & Deng. Are the authors citing a different dialect or simply using a different phonological analysis?
- The authors consider Lakkia to belong in the Kam-Sui group, although they often cite it separately from the other Kam-Sui languages.

## 2.1 Phonology

The authors state that the Kadai languages ‘gave rise to’ (*chǎnshēngle*) the ABCD tone system at a very early time, prudently refraining from committing themselves on the question of whether it is to be reconstructed for proto-Kadai. In comparing Biao with Tai and Kam-Sui, the authors find that the tones agree 70% of the time. The agreement extends to the odd/even-numbered labeling, which is to say

that it extends to those initial laryngeal features that conditioned tonal splitting. Where there is disagreement, the authors usefully distinguish three types:

- Agreement in proto-tone, disagreement in post-split category, e.g. Biao 1 = other 2. Of course this is originally a disagreement in an initial consonantal feature (voicing) that later became a disagreement in tonal category.
- Disagreement in proto-tone, agreement in post-split category (i.e. different proto-tones, the same initial consonantal feature), where the two tones are A and B. This pattern is found mainly in Chinese loans, and the authors opine that it is caused by the development in the source variety of Chinese that has already been mentioned in connection with the different layers of Chinese loans: the values of A1 (*yīnpíng*) and B1 (*yīnshàng*) flipflopped.
- Disagreement in proto-tone, agreement in post-split category, where the two tones are B and C. The authors hypothesize that this happened earlier than the previous version, at a time when the ancestral language was first developing contrastive tone in the form of a two-way contrast between one tone that later became tone A and a second tone that later split into tones B and C.

After tones, the authors consider initials and rhymes. They do this by providing numerous examples of correspondences that they have found between a Biao item (initial or rhyme) and other Kadai languages. For example, Biao words with initial /n/ have cognates in other Kadai languages with initial /ŋ/, /ʔn/ or /n/. The authors do not refer to reconstructed forms. In fact, apart from the reconstructed tones ABCD, they make no reference whatever to reconstructions.

Many of these correspondence patterns are of considerable interest. Table 2 provides just one example (p.136), in which Biao has an initial dental stop where the cognate languages have velars and palatals.

<i>Gloss</i>	<i>Biao</i>	<i>Other Kadai</i>
‘bitter’	<i>tham</i> <sup>1</sup>	Wuming <i>ham</i> <sup>2</sup> , Longzhou <i>kham</i> <sup>1</sup> , Lue <i>xum</i> <sup>1</sup> , Sui <i>qam</i> <sup>1</sup> , Maonan <i>kam</i> <sup>1</sup> , Lakkia <i>kom</i> <sup>2</sup>
‘crow’ (v.)	<i>than</i> <sup>1</sup>	Wuming <i>han</i> <sup>1</sup> , Longzhou <i>khan</i> <sup>1</sup> , Lue <i>xan</i> <sup>1</sup> , Sui <i>tan</i> <sup>1</sup> , Lakkia <i>cen</i> <sup>1</sup>
‘excrement’	<i>thai</i> <sup>1</sup>	Wuming <i>har</i> <sup>3</sup> , Dai (unspecified) <i>xi</i> <sup>3</sup> , Kam <i>e</i> <sup>4</sup> , Sui <i>qe</i> <sup>4</sup> , Maonan <i>ce</i> <sup>4</sup> , Lakkia <i>kwet</i> <sup>4</sup>

Table 2. *Biao th = other velars*

## 2.2 Lexicon

The authors recorded over 3,000 Biao words, of which they selected 2,111 for this lexical comparison. They do not describe the criteria for this selection; we can guess that they excluded recent Chinese borrowings and perhaps some grammatical function words. The 2,111 divide up into 1,275 (60.4%) identified as Chinese loans and 836 (39.6%) identified as inherited<sup>2</sup>.

It is noteworthy that the authors consider inheritance, new coinage and Chinese loans to be the only possible sources of the Biao lexicon, omitting mention of the possibility of borrowing from any other language. Biao’s location should have given it the opportunity to borrow from Hmong-Mien languages (especially, perhaps, Mienic) as well as from Chinese.

The 836 native words further divide up into 488 with cognates in other Kadai languages and 348 with no such cognates. For convenience, in the rest of this review I will call the former simply *cognates* and the latter *isolates*. In at least one discussion (p.149) the authors make it clear that they consider the isolates to be inherited.

Of the 488 cognates, the authors carry out comparison in three ways.

<sup>2</sup> The word used is 固有 *gùyǒu*. This is usually translated as ‘intrinsic, innate’ but in this context it seems to mean ‘native’ or ‘not borrowed’. It does not necessarily mean inherited from any proto-language, for the authors state that some of these nonborrowed words may have been innovated after Biao separated from the rest of Kadai.

A. The first method is to survey all possible patterns of lexical cognacy among Biao, Kam-Sui, Tai and Hlai; that is, a pattern in which a Biao word has cognates in Kam-Sui and Tai but not Hlai, a pattern in which a Biao word has cognates in Kam-Sui and Hlai but not Tai, and so on. They also give Biao-Lakkia cognates a separate listing, for reasons that will become apparent.

The authors present the results of this comparison in two different locations. In the ‘Sources of the Biao vocabulary’ in chapter 3 they present numerous examples of each pattern. In chapter 5 they simply name each pattern and state the number of examples they have found for it. Apart from the well-exemplified pattern of cognates shared among Biao, Tai, Kam-Sui and Hlai, the most numerous examples are of Biao=Tai=Kam-Sui, Biao=Tai, and Biao=Kam-Sui. That is, examined in this way, Biao looks closer to Tai and Kam-Sui than to Hlai.

Although it has no great impact on the authors’ argumentation, it seems worth pointing out that the Biao=Tai=Kam-Sui=Hlai pattern is somewhat undercounted, in that there are a number of cognate sets that the authors class as Biao=Tai=Kam-Sui to which Hlai cognates could be added. For one example, to Biao *po:i'*,<sup>3</sup> Siamese *pa'*, Wuming *pai'*, Sui *pa:i'* ‘go’ (p.73) should be added Baoding Hlai (from Ouyang and Zheng 1980) *fèi'* ‘go, walk’ (Chinese *zǒu*). A second example is Biao *lip'*, Siamese *lep'*, Wuming *yip'*, Sui *liap'*, ‘fingernail, claw’ (p.76) to which should be added Baoding Hlai *li:p'* ‘fingernail, claw’.

B. The second method is to count cognates that Biao shares with each of nine languages: Wuming, Longzhou, Tai Lue, Be (Lingao dialect), Be (Liangshan dialect<sup>4</sup>), Sui, Kam, Lakkia and Hlai. The highest number (284) of cognates is with Lakkia, but interestingly the next-highest are not Sui and Kam but Longzhou (261), Wuming (257) and Tai Lue (229). The lowest numbers are with Be (195 for

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<sup>3</sup> Written with long vowel in the table on p.73, but this must be an error since /o/ does not contrast for length. Moreover ‘go’ is written *poi'* in the lexical list on p.222.

<sup>4</sup> Previously the authors had listed only Lingao and Qiongshan dialects. It is not clear whether this Liangshan is a third Be dialect or an alternative name for Qiongshan.

Qiongsan) and Hlai (115). I leave it to others to consider whether these numbers differ by statistically significant amounts.

C. The third method uses the 200-word Swadesh list. The results are 73 Chinese loans (36.5%), 37 isolates (18.5%) and 90 inherited (45%). Of the inherited words a pairwise comparison as in the second method (but without considering Qiongsan Be) shows similar results: most cognates shared with Wuming, Lakkia and Longzhou, fewest with Hlai.

### 2.3 Grammar

This section is devoted to comparison of word order between Biao and other Kadai languages. The authors survey many constructions, mostly nominal but also verbal (respective order of verb and expressive, and of verb and adverb). The authors draw no general conclusions about the word-order patterns, but the overall impression is that where Kadai and Chinese differ, Biao retains some of the native patterns but has shifted to the Chinese pattern more than most Kadai languages have.

### 2.4 Conclusions

Among the conclusions that the authors draw from this data are the following:

- There is a high proportion of Chinese borrowings in Biao, higher than in other Kadai languages, and extending to replacement of quite basic words (e.g. *cloud, sleep, ask, mouth*) with Chinese. This is because Biao separated from the rest of Kadai relatively early.
- Inherited words still occupy 39.6% of the 2,111-word sample and 63.5% of the Swadesh list. Some of the isolates may be retentions of inherited words that were replaced in most or all other Kadai languages.
- The close connection of Biao and Lakkia may have a geographical explanation: Biao and Lakkia remained in the southwest Guangdong-southeast Guangxi area after (other) Kam-Sui speakers moved north.
- Since Biao and Lakkia share so many cognates, they ought to be placed in the same subgroup. The authors agree with those who

place Lakkia in Kam-Sui, and so their view is that Biao belongs in that group also.

The authors do not state how that last conclusion squares with the Biao sharing more cognates with Tai than with Kam-Sui. However, I agree that Biao and Lakkia are especially close, and offer a few more bits of additional evidence:

- Like Biao, Lakkia tones have a simple two-way voicing-conditioned split. Also like Biao, Lakkia tone sandhi simply merges all high-series tones as mid-level and all low-series tones as low-level.
- To the lexical items shared by Biao and Lakkia and no other Kadai languages we can add Biao *lɔk<sup>10</sup>* ‘house’ (listed by the authors in the group of isolates), cognate with Lakkia *liek<sup>8</sup>* ‘house’.

In sum, this is a welcome and valuable piece of work describing a hitherto unknown language. Although I have expressed dissatisfaction with its coverage of some grammatical areas, I recognize that this may in some part be due to the scope defined for the book by the series that it is part of. It should be noted that although 297 pages is not a small number, the format of the book is not large, with pages measuring about 14 by 20 centimeters (about 5 1/2 by 8 inches). But the lexical and comparative data is especially rich and should prove to be of great use for researchers. Perhaps we can hope for further synchronic description of Biao at a later date from the authors or from other linguists.

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