
The book under review here Laijiu Yanjiu (A study of the Lachi language) by Li Yunbing (LYB) is one of the new series 中国新发现语言研究丛书 (Collected Research on Newly Discovered Languages of China) under the editorship of Professor Sun Hongkai of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Nationalities Research Institute. This new series plans in the years to come to describe the understudied languages and people groups within China that lie outside the fifty-five officially recognized nationalities, now that the descriptions of the officially-recognized groups, the 语言简志 (Brief linguistic sketches) series, has been completed. This undertaking is of great value and of great importance at this crucial time of rapid linguistic change and language shift, as in many homes parents are choosing to pass on Chinese or some other regional language instead of their mother tongue to their children. Moreover, in some cases the books in this new series may be the first accounts of length about these languages. That may be true of Lachi, for example. As well, this undertaking has given opportunity to many younger scholars to publish important work as China’s senior researchers and linguistic scholars near retirement. In this case, Mr. Li Yunbing has provided a 333-page introduction to the Lachi language of Yunnan Province, Maguan County, which is the language of a small population of speakers living in the China-Vietnam Borderlands area. Lachi and closely related language groups in this geographic area are highly informative for comparativists studying the genetic affiliation of Thai and its linguis-
tic relatives, as has been demonstrated very convincingly by Ostapirat 2000.

*Lajiyu Yanjiu* is divided into six chapters. The study opens with a chapter on: (a) the origin and distribution of the Lachi, (b) the language use situation, (c) societal structure and means of winning a livelihood or means of production, (d) material culture, and (e) non-material culture. Chapter 2 is called *The language* with subsections on: (a) initials, (b) rhymes, (c) tones, and (d) syllable structure. Chapter 3 sketches *The lexicon* with treatments of: (a) component parts of lexical items, (b) meanings of the lexical items, (c) synonyms, antonyms, and homophones, (d) making up lexical items, and (e) expanding the lexicon. Chapter 4 is about *Grammar* with subsections on: (a) lexical categories, (b) phrases, (c) sentential elements, and (d) sentence types and sentence templates. Chapter 5 addresses *Dialectology*. Chapter 6 discusses questions of the *Genetic affiliation* of Lachi with subsections on: (a) Lachi and Kam-Tai comparisons, (b) Lachi and 羌 Yi comparisons, (c) Lachi, 仡佬 Gelao, and 木佬 Mǔláo comparisons, (d) Lachi and 布央 Buyang and 普标 Pubiao (Qabiao) comparisons, and (e) the position of Lachi. The book ends with a discussion of Results and three short narratives.

The most important feature of the first chapter concerns the names of the Lachi, for names have always been a problem in regard to this group. Nowadays this ethnicity is called in Chinese 拉基 with *Hanyu Pinyin* form *lājī* and a pronunciation *[la5ti5]*. In Vietnam these people are called *La Chi* and early 20th century French sources
used the romanization Lati, presumably because Lachi would have been a French spelling for [laʔi] and not for [la tei]. In Chinese historical books, chronicles, gazetteers, and descriptions, however, the characters often used to designate the people and language group, the Lachi, have been 喇 無 which would be pronounced [la³po²]; sometimes the first character was also written with a dog radical. It is to be noted, though, that 無 may apparently also be read ji [tei], as is seen in the website describing the hanging coffin burial practices of the 無人 Jiren of Zhaotong County, Yunnan Province on the website /www.yunnaninfo.com/Chinesebig5/yunnan/zhaotong/scenery_jirenxuanguan.htm/. At a later time the characters 拉鸡 became common. When this group is described in western languages, it has traditionally been spelled Lachi and not Laji. I follow this practice as well and use the exonym Lachi. Despite the bewildering flurry of monikers put on them by the Chinese, the French, and other western writers, the contemporary autonym of the Lachi people, i.e. [li³⁵pu⁴⁴jo⁴⁴], appears to harken back to la po, and may have a separate history from [la tei]. It is to be noted though that li³⁵ in this name is reconstructed by Ostapirat 2000 as *lak⁵² 'child, offspring', which is a term often used to refer to the people as a whole, cf. Thai lìuuk ‘child’ and Kam laak¹⁰ ktm¹ ‘the Kam’. Further confusion is added to the history of self-designations by the Lachi themselves, as in Vietnam where in my field notes the most common autonym is recorded as [qu³¹ te³⁴]. The form qu³¹ is the etymon for 'people', cf. Ostapirat’s 2000 reconstruction *khraⁱ, which is manifested in Flowery Lachi as hu³³ or fu⁳³. The second element of the name is unclear as to origin at the moment.
LYB points out that this group has no official status in China, but it is an officially recognized minority of Vietnam. He states Lachi are found in Yunnan Province at Maguan County where there are both written documents and oral traditions regarding the history of this group. They are also found in Vietnam. Indeed, we know from our own fieldwork in Vietnam that the Lachi are found today at Xin Mần Township 菁门 formerly called 兴门 of Hoàng Su Phi District 黄树皮 and also at Bạc Quang District (北光), all in Hà Giang Province 河江. The village names are Bản Phùng 曼蓬 (BPh), Bản Panggal 曼邦, Bản Diệu 曼尤 (BD), Bản Má, and Bản Máy 曼美; those in Bạc Quang District are originally from Bản Diệu and were moved there in 1979 during a time of hostilities on the Sino-Vietnam border. Although the original settlement of the Lachi precursor people in ancient times is thought to have been in Chinese territory, the Lachi people of Yunnan Province today are immigrants from Vietnam. LYB reports that the old people tell that the Yunnan Lachi moved to Maguan County about 300 years ago from the Vietnamese villages of Maibu, Maidu, and Maiha because of killings and conflicts, but it is not known where these places are located today. Another account has it that they came from the district of Amizhou from the places called Rooster Village and Hen Village. As the story goes, the Lachi were defeated in a dispute and needed to abandon their then homeland. The two villages agreed to emigrate at the moment of the auspicious cry of the chicken. But, in Rooster Village it was a rooster who first screamed out a greeting to an early dawn and that village heard the signal and set out, whereas those in Hen Village did not hear it and waited until noon when the brood hen began clucking when she had