Some Comments on Benedict's "Miao-Yao Enigma": Addendum

David Strecker

I ended my paper with the words "I agree with Benedict, however, that more data on the Pa Hng languages are needed before questions such as these can be resolved." Some of these additional data have now become available. On the very day that I mailed my paper off to be considered for publication I received from Wang Fushi a comparative wordlist including 80 words in the dialect of Pa Hng spoken in Wenjie. 57 of these are new words, not given in either Mao, Meng, and Zheng or the Institute wordlist. The kindness and generosity of Professor Wang now make it possible for me to fill in some gaps and correct some mistakes in my treatment of Wenjie.

In addition, Dr. Benedict has sent me several pages of detailed comments and corrections on my paper. Discussing these will require a separate paper, but I will mention a few of Benedict's most important corrections below.

1. Preface

With regard to my schema of Hmong-Mien subgroups, Wang agrees with me that on purely linguistic grounds Pu Nu would be considered a subgroup of the Sichuan-Guizhou-Yunnan branch of Hmongic. He goes on to explain, however (in his letter accompanying the comparative wordlist), that Chinese writers base their classifications on non-linguistic criteria as well: "The policy of our country holds that the speech of each national minority is named according to the official name of the national minority." Thus Chinese writers divide Hmongic into Miáo yǔ, namely those languages whose speakers are culturally as well as linguistically Hmong, and Bùnú yǔ, namely those languages whose speakers are linguistically Hmong but culturally Yao. I think it is important to understand that we are not dealing here with any disagreement about the histories of the languages but merely with different types of classification, based on different criteria and fulfilling different purposes.

Wang disagrees with Benedict's and my idea that Pa Hng should be a separate branch: "the materials show the close relation between pa 31(3) ป ๕5(1) and pu 54(3') nu 24(2')." Thus Wang would retain Pa Hng within Hmongic.

Benedict rightly questions my raising Hm Nai, Kiong Nai, and Yu Nuo to the status of separate branches without giving any evidence for this. Let me therefore rephrase my suggestion thus:

Hm Nai, Kiong Nai, and Yu Nuo have been considered to be branches of Hmongic. I know of no evidence to the
contrary, but it is difficult to be certain because not very much has been written about these languages. Mao, Meng, and Zheng, while grouping them with Pu Nu, do point out that they are rather distinctive. Thus I hope very much that someone will do a systematic historical-comparative study of these languages along the lines of Wang (1979).

So let me give a more conservative schema of subgroupings:

I. Hmongic
   A. Eastern Guizhou (Purnell's "Eastern") [HM]
   B. West Hunan (Purnell's "Northern") [HM]
   C. Sichuan-Guizhou-Yunnan (Purnell's "Central" and "Western")
      1. Sichuan-Guizhou-Yunnan (Purnell's "West A") [HM]
      2. Northeast Yunnan [HM]
      3. Guiyang [HM]
      4. Huishui [HM]
      5. Mashan [HM]
      6. Luobo River [HM]
      7. Eastern or Chong'an River [HM, Gedou]
      8. Pu Nu (Tung Nu) [BN]
      9. Nu Nu [BN]
     10. Pu No [BN]
     11. Nao Klao [BN]
     12. Nu Mhou [BN]
   D. Probably Hmongic but exact classification uncertain:
      1. Hm Nai [BN]
      2. Kiong Nai [BN]
      3. Yu Nuo [BN]

II. Ho Nte

III. Mienic
   A. Mien-Kim: Mien (Iu Mien), Mun (Kim Mun), Biao Mon
   B. Biao-Chao: Biao Min, Chao Kong Meng
   C. Dzao Min

IV. Classification uncertain: Pa Hng [BN], Na-e

Within the Hmongic group, languages marked HM are spoken by people who are culturally Hmong and are called "Miao" by Chinese writers, and languages marked BN are spoken by people who are culturally Yao and are called "Bunu" by Chinese writers. Speakers of the Chong'an River dialect group call themselves [ghog 33 (1)] in their own language, and are included under "Miao" by Chinese linguists, but they themselves, when speaking Chinese, say that they are Gé dou

2. Transcription

Mao, Meng, and Zheng give only the etymological values of the Wenjie tones, following the usual convention: 1 = A1, 2 = A2, etc. Wang gives the pitch contours as well, using the usual five point scale with 1 the lowest pitch and 5 the highest: 55 = high level, 54 = falling from high to mid high, etc. This makes it possible to compare the pitch contours of Na-e, Wenjie, and Xishanjie:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Na-e</th>
<th>Wenjie</th>
<th>Xishanjie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>acute</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>acute</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Wenjie and probably in Na-e syllables with lower register tones, A2, B2, C2, D2, are pronounced with whispery voice. In Wenjie the whispery voice serves to distinguish B2 from B1, which has the same pitch contour. (See section 4.)

3. Evidence that Na-e belongs to the Pa Hng group

(1) *r and *Dr become yod: Wenjie [jo 35(1)] 'stone'.

(2) Velar and uvular initials merge into a single series, realized phonetically as uvular in Wenjie. But in some words Wenjie has a velar initial. I have no explanation for this.
(4) Proto-Hmongic final -5: Wenjie [mpjo 31(4)] 'fish', [jo 35(1)] 'stone'.

Proto-Hmongic final -6: Wenjie [phee 53(7)] 'daughter' (compare Na-e pie 1-ten 1 'younger sister'), [Nqhé 33(2)] 'meat'.

Proto-Hmongic final -23: Wenjie [t5 35(1)] 'son', [t5 55(5)] 'to snap, break', [l5 35(1)] (classifier), [q5 35(1)] 'horn', [q5 35(1)] 'star'.

(11) 'two': Wang gives Wenjie [va 35(1)] with the historically expected tone, Al. The form in Mao, Meng, and Zheng with tone D1 is perhaps a misprint.

3a. Additional characteristics shared by the Pa Hng languages

(1) The ethnoynmn [ŋ53], with tone Al: Wenjie [pa 31(3)] "Pa Hng", Xishanjie [ŋŋ 34(1)] 'people'. (It is not clear from Chang whether the Xishanjie form means people in general or specifically Pa Hng people.) Is [pa 31(3)] "Pa Hng" related to the Vietnamese name Păthen? And what is the source of the name Na-e?

(2) The word for 'thousand' has tone C1 instead of the historically expected tone Al: Wenjie [pe 55(5)], Xishanjie [pe 55(5)]. For Na-e Bonifacy writes de 1 [de] with tone 1. Unfortunately Bonifacy's tone 1 seems to represent cases where he simply failed to hear the tone.

(3) Wang's Proto-Hmongic final -15 generally corresponds to Pa Hng [u], [u], or [u]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Na-e</th>
<th>Wenjie</th>
<th>Xishanjie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bean</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>tuw 31(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iron</td>
<td>-au 3[ŋu]</td>
<td>4u 55(5)</td>
<td>4u 55(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six</td>
<td>ku 3</td>
<td>tāu 55(5)</td>
<td>tāu 55(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>ṭpēhu 33(2)</td>
<td>ṭhu 33(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ten</td>
<td>ku 1</td>
<td>kēhu 32(8)</td>
<td>ku 31(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blind*</td>
<td>ku 1</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But 'to drink' has [ɔ]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Na-e</th>
<th>Wenjie</th>
<th>Xishanjie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>drink</td>
<td>hō 3</td>
<td>hō 53(7)</td>
<td>hō 54(7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This word may be a recent loan from Chinese. Compare Cantonese [hōt 33(7)].