

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

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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 Miǎo yǔ, namely those languages whose speakers are culturally as well as linguistically Hmong, and Bùnxǔ 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) 35(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]
 - 4 - 12. Nine additional major groups [HM]: see Wang (1983:1).

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 [phon 33 (1)] in their own language, and are included under "Miao" by Chinese linguists, but they themselves, when speaking Chinese, say that they are Gédou

people rather than Miao people (Wang 1979, pp. 27-28).

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:

	Na-e	Wenjie	Xishanjie
A1	interrogative	35	34
A2	descending	33	33
B1	descending	31	22
B2	descending	31	11
C1	acute	55	55
C2	descending	44	44
D1	acute	53	54
D2	descending	32	31

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 *ʔr 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.

	Proto-Hm. Prepalatal	Proto-Hm. Velar	Proto-Hm. Uvular
Wenjie uvular	Nqo 35(1) 'mushroom' Nqo 3 'rice bread'	q̃ 35(1) 'horn' q̃ 1 'warm' q̃ 35(1) 'insect' qo 3 'road'	q̃ 35(1) 'star' qa 31(3) 'excrement' qo 55(5) 'old' qh̃ 31(3) 'hole' Nqo 35(1) 'pigeon' Nqh̃ 33(2) 'meat'
Wenjie velar	k̃ho 33(2) 'nine' ŋ̃h̃ 33(2) 'cow'	k̃ 35(1) 'needle' k̃hu 32(8) 'ten' ŋ̃k̃h̃ 32(8) 'pair'	

(4) Proto-Hmongic final -5: Wenjie [mpjo 31(4)] 'fish', [jo 35(1)] 'stone'.

Proto-Hmongic final -6: Wenjie [phe 53(7)] 'daughter' (compare Na-e piě 1 dièn 1 'younger sister'), [Nqɦɛ 33(2)] 'meat'.

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

(11) 'two': Wang gives Wenjie [va 35(1)] with the historically expected tone, A1. 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 ethnoym [ɣ̃ɲ], with tone A1: Wenjie [pa 31(3)] ɣ̃ɲ 35(1)] 'Pa Hng', Xishanjie [hɲ 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)] ɣ̃ɲ 35(1)] related to the Vietnamese name Pàthên? And what is the source of the name Nà-ế?

(2) The word for 'thousand' has tone C1 instead of the historically expected tone A1: Wenjie [p̃ɛ 55(5)], Xishanjie [p̃ɛ 55(5)]. For Na-e Bonifacy writes de 1 [ɗe] 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], [u̯], or [u̯]:

	Na-e	Wenjie	Xishanjie
bean	---	---	tu 31(8)
iron	ɗu ³ [ɗu]	ɗu 55(5)	ɗu 55(5)
six	ku ³	tɕu 55(5)	tɕu 55(5)
mouth	---	ɲtɕu 33(2)	ɲu 33(2)
ten	ku ¹	kɦu 32(8)	ku 31(8)
blind*	ku ¹	---	---

But 'to drink' has [ɕ]:

	Na-e	Wenjie	Xishanjie
drink	hɗ ³	hɕ 53(7)	hɕ 54(7)

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

*Not in Wang (1979). See the Layiping and Yanghao forms in Wang (1985a:170) -- the vowel in the Dananshan form is irregular.