

Comments on the 'Hani' dialects of Loloish.

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My interest in the Hani dialects of the Loloish (or Yi-ish) branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages began some six years ago when I was attempting a rough subgrouping of the dialects cited by Matisoff in his study of the proto-Loloish tonal split (Matisoff 1972). In that work, Matisoff had, in passing, questioned the linguistic relevance of some of the Chinese ethnolinguistic groupings; the name 'Hani', in particular, had been applied to dialects that seemed, at least superficially, quite divergent. Looking at the full range of Hani dialects, rather than just at the extremes, however, I noticed that, appropriately arranged, they suggested a series of stages in a relatively simple phonological evolution. And from this perspective, the original Hani grouping looked much less far-fetched. At the time, I reported these observations in a short, unpublished paper, then put the question of subgrouping aside for other things.

Since that time, several articles (Nishi 1975, Bradley 1977a, Wang 1981) dealing with some of the same Hani material have appeared. Yet I feel my own work still covers some new ground and deserves a better fate than moldering in a file. So I welcome this opportunity to publish it, revised and updated as much as possible 1), in this issue of LTBA 2).

1. It would have been interesting to explore the relationship of the Hani dialects to those in the so-called 'Bisoid' group (Matisoff 1972, Bradley 1977a), that includes the dialects of Bisu, Phunoi, Pyen and possibly Mpi (cf. Matisoff 1976) as well. Hani (or 'Hanoid') and Bisoid probably form a major 'Southern' subdivision within Loloish, on a par with the Lahu, Lisu and Yi subdivisions. Bradley (1977a) does propose such a Southern grouping, in fact; but he excludes certain of the Hani dialects, as we will see. For me to have attempted to include discussion of the Bisoid dialects in this article would have meant a complete rewriting rather than a revision.

2. Section 3 of this article was the subject of a paper presented at the 13th Sino-Tibetan Conference held at the University of Virginia in 1980.

1. Background.

Chinese ethnolinguistic classifications usually recognize five divisions in their Yi-ish (Loloish) subbranch of languages: Hani, Lahu, Lisu, Yi (=Lolo Proper) and Naxi (=Nakhi) 3). Bradley (1975) casts doubt on the inclusion of Naxi. That the others form a coherent Loloish grouping is, however, uncontroversial; what is still not generally accepted is the composition of some of the four divisions. Lahu dialects are relatively compact; Lisu, less so. But Hani and Yi, as presented in the Chinese writings, contain apparently diverse dialects, and as a result, neither name has gained much currency among linguists outside China. Here we will consider only the Hani dialects.

1.1. Materials.

The Hani dialects are not as well documented as some of the other Loloish languages spoken in southwestern China, but several articles have appeared in the years since 1949: Li Yungsuei (1979) has provided us with a short grammatical sketch of Lüchun Hani, the dialect with the largest number of speakers; and Hu Tan and Dai Qingsha (1964) provided several hundred citations from the same dialect in the course of a discussion on the incidence of a 'tense' versus 'lax' vowel quality distinction that appears in most Hani dialects. The Lüchun dialect was discussed by Bradley (1969, 1977a); it is also the Ha(HT) of Matisoff (1972).

In addition to Lüchun forms, Hu and Dai cite from half a dozen to over fifty forms from a range of Hani dialects spoken in southern Yunnan. Li mentions most of these, and some others besides, in a survey of Hani dialects at the end of his article. He cites very few forms, however.

Very recently, Wang (1981) has discussed the affiliations of one of the dialects mentioned by Hu and Dai, that called 'Haoni', citing several dozen additional forms and enlarging upon observations made by both Hu and Dai and, later, Li.

Another dialect named Hani, this one spoken in the Eshan region of central Yunnan (see map), formed the basis

3. Zhang (1967) and Luo and Fu (1954) include a sixth language, Achang, (=Maingtha) a language generally considered to be Burmish rather than Loloish, in their Yi-ish subdivision. Luo and Fu also include Minjia (or Bai). The most recent classification that I know of, Jou and Dai (1980), puts Achang with Zaiwa (=Atsi) in a single subgrouping (presumably Burmish), isolates Bai, and settles on the original five as Yi-ish once again.

of a grammatical sketch and vocabulary compiled by Gao Huanian (1955). Gao's dialect, which diverges quite sharply from the Hu and Dai dialects, is very similar to a dialect named 'Woni', also spoken in the Eshan region, described in a brief article by Yuan Jiahua (1947). Gao's Hani and Yuan's Woni are cited in Matisoff (1972) as Ha(K) and Wo. respectively.

Looking ahead: After a brief discussion of the names 'Hani', 'Woni' and 'Akha', we will examine the Hu and Dai dialects; then we will go on to consider the aberrant Eshan dialects described by Gao and Yuan. We will try to show that some of the most obvious differences among dialects labelled 'Hani' are relatively superficial; that the apparent breadth of dialect differentiation is, in part, the result of a small number of phonological changes that have taken place in the history of Hani. The conclusions support those of Nishi (1975), whose study of Hani and Akha overlaps this one.

1.2. Nomenclature: Hani, Woni and Akha.

Bradley, in an unpublished study of the Akha dialects (1969), noticed the similarity between the dialect of Akha spoken in the Kengtung region of Burma-- the dialect that formed the basis of Lewis's Akha to English dictionary--and the Lüchun dialect of Hani described by Hu and Dai (and, later, by Li). The dialects are so similar that it is safe to conclude that at least some of the Hani are simply 'Akha' living in China. But not all, so it seemed. As we mentioned earlier, Matisoff (1972:10) had noticed that Gao's Eshan Hani dialect (and the almost identical dialect described by Yuan) were, apparently, quite different from Hu and Dai's Lüchun Hani (and Lewis's Akha), and he had suggested that they belonged to separate divisions within Loloish. Bradley (1977a) concurred, and went further: after examining the Hu and Dai dialects he concluded that they, too, fell on different sides of the breach: one group (Li's HA-YA; cf.2 below), that included the important Lüchun dialect, he placed with dialects such as Lewis's Akha in an 'Akhoid' subdivision; the others (Li's BI-KA and HAO-BAI), he placed with Gao's Hani and Yuan's Woni in a 'Wonoid' group, the latter linked not to his 'Southern' dialects (Akhoid and Bisoid, basically), but to his 'Central' subdivision that includes Lahu and Lisu (Bradley 1977a:38). Thus, the Hani grouping assumed by Hu and Dai, and later by Li and Wang and others, was split into two groups, one 'Hani proper', the other 'Woni', the two immediately affiliated not with each other, but with languages in distinctly different subdivisions of Loloish.

There is no good precedent for distinguishing the names Hani and Woni in this way. In Chinese writings, they are intended to be synonymous; after 1949, 'Hani', an autonym of

the Lüchun and Jiayin speakers according to Li (1979:134), replaced 'Woni' just as 'Yi' replaced 'Lolo'. Thus Yuan, writing in 1947, calls his dialect 'Woni', while Gao, describing a nearly identical dialect in 1955, calls his 'Hani'.

A connection between Woni and Akha (and, hence, Hani) was noticed long ago. W.H. Davies, one of the first Europeans to encounter the Loloish peoples, met with a number of tribes on his travels in south-central Yunnan, which he reported to be called, generically, 'Woni' by the Chinese. Their individual names, he transcribed as K'a-tu, Pu-tu, Ma-hei, Pi-o, Lo-pi and A-K'a or K'o (Davies 1909:393). The last is the name of the southernmost of the tribes according to Davies. It is, of course, our Akha. The heartland of the Woni peoples, he placed in the district of Talang Ting (modern Mojiang), well within Hu and Dai's Hani region.

Davies provided word lists of A-K'a and Ma-hei in an appendix to the account of his travels. Davies also notes that the Ma-hei call themselves Pa-hawng, i.e. what in Hu and Dai is transcribed Baihong. K'a-tu and Pi-o are presumably Hu and Dai's Kaduo and Biyue, respectively. Baihong, Kaduo and Biyue are the three dialects that Bradley pared away from Hani 'Proper' and placed in a Wonoid group. Pu-Tu is mentioned as a Hani dialect in Luo and Fu (1954).

Several decades after Davies' work appeared, Shafer and Benedict, who made use of Davies' Ma-hei word list (but not his A-K'a, which was superseded by the work of Roux), wrote in the introduction to the "Burmish-Loloish" volume of their comprehensive survey of Sino-Tibetan (1939: viii), "the term 'Woni' is applied indiscriminately (sic) to the Loloish tribes of southern Yunnan, yet these groups do perhaps show some linguistic unity."

The doubts that Shafer and Benedict felt about the name 'Woni' have, as we have seen, persisted through the change in names. It may be the Chinese ethnolinguistic groupings are incorrect--this paper is intended to shed some light on that question; but correct or not, it is clear that the autonym 'Hani' was intended to replace the older name 'Woni' and that, included within its reference, were the people identified as 'Akha' outside China. Unfortunately, both 'Hani' and 'Akha' are well-established names now, and it would be useless to try to choose one over the other. Here, I will use 'Hani' for those dialects spoken within China, and 'Akha' for those spoken outside, in Laos, Burma and Thailand. No special linguistic significance should be attached to this convention however.