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 Miao yû, namely those languages whose speakers are culturally as well as linguistically Hmong, and Bûnû yû, 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 3l(3) ɗ 35(1) and pu 52(3') nu 29(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 Mhoup [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 (Tu 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 (l)] in their own language, and are included under "Miao" by Chinese linguists, but they themselves, when speaking Chinese, say that they are Gédou

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>Na-e</th>
<th>Wenjie</th>
<th>Xishanjie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>acute</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>acute</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>descending</td>
<td>32</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 *ȑr 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Hm. Prepalatal</th>
<th>Proto-Hm. Velar</th>
<th>Proto-Hm. Uvular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wenjie uvular</td>
<td>Nqo 35(1) 'mushroom'</td>
<td>qɔ̄ 35(1) 'horn'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenjie uvular</td>
<td>Nqo 3 'rice bread'</td>
<td>qɔ̄ 1 'warm'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenjie velar</td>
<td>kʰɔ̄ 33(2) 'nine'</td>
<td>kɔ̄ 35(1) 'needle'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenjie velar</td>
<td>ɲʰ 33(2) 'cow'</td>
<td>kʰu 32(8) 'ten'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenjie velar</td>
<td></td>
<td>ɲkʰu 32(8) 'ten'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wenjie velar</td>
<td></td>
<td>ɲkʰy 32(8) 'ten'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(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 pie 1 tên 1 'younger sister'), [Nqhe 33(2)] 'meat'.

Proto-Hmongic final -23: Wenjie [t ธ 35(1)] 'son', [q ธ 55(5)] 'to snap, break', [1 ธ 35(1)] (classifier), [q ธ 35(1)] 'horn', [q ธ 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 ethnoymn [ᵣə], with tone Al: Wenjie [pə 31(3)] ᵣə 35(1) 'Pa Hng', Xishanjie [hə 34(1)] 'people'. (It is not clear from Chang whether the Xishanjie form means people in general or specifically Pa Hng people.) Is [pə 31(3)] ᵣə 35(1) related to the Vietnamese name Pàthen? And what is the source of the name Nà-è?

(2) The word for 'thousand' has tone C1 instead of the historically expected tone Al: Wenjie [pə 55(5)], Xishanjie [pə 55(5)]. For Na-e Bonifacy writes ɓə 1 [ɓə] 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>tuu 31(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iron</td>
<td>-aw³ [₃u]</td>
<td>ᵃu 55(5)</td>
<td>ᵃu 55(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six</td>
<td>ku³</td>
<td>tₐu 55(5)</td>
<td>tₐu 55(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>ᵇₐₕu 33(2)</td>
<td>ᵇₐu 33(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ten</td>
<td>ku₁</td>
<td>kₐu 32(8)</td>
<td>ku 31(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blind*</td>
<td>ku₁</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>ᶠ³</td>
<td>ᶠ₃3 7</td>
<td>ᶠ₃ 54(7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

4. Some further remarks on initials

The pattern of development of prenasalized stops in Wenjie appears to be as follows:

*mph- > ph-: [phe 53(7)] 'daughter'. But [nte 31(3)] 'blood'.

*mp- > mp-: [mpe 55(5)] 'pig', [mpjo 35(1)] 'green', [nte 31(3)] 'to wash (hands)', [ntao 31(3)] 'early', [ntI 35(2)] 'cloth', [nta 53(7)] 'to weave', [Nqo 35(1)] 'mushroom', [Nqo 3] 'rice bread', [Nqo 35(1)] 'pigeon'.

*mb- > mph-: [-mphjo 2] 'ear' (sc. [mph-]: see below), [mphjo 44(6)] 'nose', [mphI 32(8)] 'peppery', [mphjo 33(2)] 'leaf', [nto 33(2)] 'mouth', [nto 32(8)] 'pair', [Nqhe 33(2)] 'meat'.

The forms [mpjo 31(4)] 'fish' (Wang) and [-mpi 8] 'fan' (Mao, Meng, and Zheng) are perhaps typographic errors for forms with [-h-]: see below.

Wenjie does not share with Na-e the Northern-Pa-Hng-like development in mb 1 'leaf'. Wenjie has [mphjo 33(2)]. But Wenjie does show a Northern-like development in [nho 33(2)] 'boat' and [nqhe 31(4)] 'lazy', both from *ŋg-. Note also Wenjie [l̥ja 31(4)] 'to flow', from *nŋl-.

I also said that in Southern Pa Hng initials are regularly aspirated in syllables with lower register tones. I used the word "aspiration" loosely to refer to both true aspiration, that is, delay of voice onset, and "voiced aspiration", that is, whispery voice, because I was not certain which type of aspiration Mao, Meng, and Zheng meant to represent by the symbol [h]. Wang's list clearly shows whispery voice, [ŋ], in all lower register tones, including D2:

A2: [pʰy 33(2)] 'flower', [mphjo 33(2)] 'leaf', [nho 33(2)] 'eat', [tʰi 33(2)] 'door', [l̥ja 33(2)] 'farmland', [kho 33(2)] 'nine', [ŋ 33(2)] 'cow', [nto 33(2)] 'mouth', [nho 33(2)] 'boat, ship', [Nqhe 33(2)] 'flesh', [kwɪ 33(2)] 'yellow'.

B2: [mI 31(4)] 'horse', [vhe 31(4)] 'boiler', [tʰy 31(4)] 'fire', [nho 31(4)] 'he, she, it', [nqhe 31(4)] 'lazy', [l̥ja 31(4)] 'flow'.

C2: [mI 44(6)] 'sell', [mphjo 44(6)] 'nose', [tʰ 44(6)] 'die', [tʃa 44(6)] 'seven'.

D2: [vhe 32(8)] 'ten thousand' (D2 in Pa Hng and some Hmong languages; generally C2), [mphI 32(8)] 'peppery', [jhi 32(8)] 'eight', [khu 32(8)] 'ten', [ŋkhi 32(8)] 'pair', [jhu 32(8)] 'one' (compare Mien [jet 12(8)]).

The Institute wordlist, as reproduced by Moskalev, likewise shows whispery voice:

...
A2: [-mphio 2] 'ear'
C2: [-mhi 6] 'eye'
D2: no examples.

There are three exceptions, which may be typographic errors:

Wang [mpjo 31(4)] 'fish', with unaspirated initial.
Mao, Meng, and Zheng [- mpi 8] 'fan', with unaspirated initial.

Institute wordlist (in Moskalev) [-mphjo 6] 'nose', with [h] instead of [k].

Thus I interpret Bonifacy's mhu₁ 'bird' as [mhu] and assert that the [h] is a predictable correlate of the tone and does not imply any sort of prefix. This interpretation is better for Benedict's overall argument since it makes for a more straightforward development from Proto-Austro-Tai *mrok to Na-e mhu₁. I am happy to report that Benedict and I are now in agreement on this interpretation of Bonifacy's form.

Finally, Wenjie agrees with Xishanjie and disagrees with Na-e in having prepalatal initials in 'seven', 'blood', and 'six':

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Hmongic</th>
<th>Wenjie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>seven</td>
<td>*dʒ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blood</td>
<td>*ʈʂʰ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>door</td>
<td>*dɿ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fir</td>
<td>*tʂ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thrush</td>
<td>*tʂ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wine</td>
<td>*tɿ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>*ɲɿ-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six</td>
<td>*tɿ-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Evidence for separating Pa Hng from Hmongic

(1) Proto-Hmongic dentals = Pa Hng dentals: Wenjie
[ty 35(1)] 'earth', [tʃ 35(1)] 'skirt', [tɕ 35(1)] 'son',
[thr 31(4)] 'fire', [tʃe 44(6)] 'die', [nʃ 35(1)] 'snake',
[nɔ 55(5)] 'cold', [ŋe 35(1)] 'sun, day', [ŋe 35(1)] 'ear of
grain', [nhu 31(4)] 'he, she, it', [nhɔ 33(2)] 'eat',
[nɔI 35(1)] 'cloth', [nta 53(7)] 'weave', [la5 35(1)] (classi-
sifier), [lau 55(5)] 'moon', [lu 55(5)] 'iron'

Proto-Hmongic dentals = Pa Hng labials: no examples in
Wang's list.

I may have been mistaken in including 'hemp' among the
examples of Proto-Hmongic dentals corresponding to Pa Hng
labials. Benedict has reminded me that Proto-Hmongic *ndo C
'hemp' may be related to Archaic Chinese *ŋ ~ *dfio B (a kind
of hemp) (GSR 84e; see also Chen and Li 1981, 17). If we
accept the view of Chinese linguists that Hmong-Mien is geneti-
cally related to Chinese, then 'hemp' may have had some sort
of cluster in Proto-Sino-Tibetan which became labial in Na-e
and which became dental in other Hmong-Mien languages and in
Chinese. If we accept Benedict's view that Hmong-Mien is a
branch of Austro-Tai, then the lexical resemblances between
Hmong-Mien and Chinese are due to borrowing. Then we have
two possibilities:

(1) Benedict's view is that the Proto-Hmong-Mien word was
borrowed from some dialect of Archaic Chinese and therefore
always had a dental initial in Hmong-Mien. Na-e b63 is com-
pletely unrelated to Proto-Hmongic *ndo C.

(2) Conversely, the Chinese word may have been borrowed
from a Hmong-Mien language. In that case, it is still pos-
sible that the Proto-Hmong-Mien word had some sort of cluster
which became labial in Na-e and dental everywhere else. The
Chinese form would simply have been borrowed from a language
other than Na-e after the change to a dental initial had al-
ready taken place.

I am not prepared at the present time to enter the con-
troversy over whether Chinese borrowed words from Hmong-Mien
(Wang 1985b:30-31); I am merely raising this as a theoretical
possibility. I do not know whether this is relevant or not,
but I learn from The Times Atlas of China (1974 edition, page
81) that hemp fiber is an important crop in the region of
Guangxi where Pa Hng is spoken.

(2) Proto-Hmongic prepalatals = Pa Hng prepalalals:
Wenjie [tai 35(1)] 'fir', [tɔ5 35(1)] 'thrush', [tɔr 31(3)]
'wine', [nI 35(1)] 'wife', [ntɔphu 33(2)] 'mouth', [jhi 32(8)]
'eight'.

Proto-Hmongic prepalatalas = Pa Hng velars or uvulars:
Velar: Wenjie [kho 33(2)] 'nine', [ŋh 33(2)] 'cow'.
Uvular: Wenjie [Nqo 35(1)] 'mushroom', [Nqo 3] 'rice bread'.

Notice that 'mushroom' has a uvular initial in Wenjie
versus a prepalatal initial in Xishanjie.
(3) Na-e stands alone as our sole witness for a velar initial in ku 3 'six'. Both Wenjie and Xishanjie have a prepalatal initial: Wenjie [tʰu 55(5)], Xishanjie [tʰu 55(5)].

(4) Wang's final -13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Na-e</th>
<th>Wenjie</th>
<th>Xishanjie</th>
<th>Gundong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to see</td>
<td>vâ²</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>-la̞³</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>la 55(5)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strength</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>jae 44(6)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to weave</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>nta 53(7)</td>
<td>nae 54(7)</td>
<td>na³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to laugh</td>
<td>t'â¹</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>tæe 54(7)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duck</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>tæe 54(7)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to see</td>
<td>-pa²</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>pa 31(8)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thunder</td>
<td>bo²</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deep</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>to 34(1)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>4jo 35(1)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>nţo 31(3)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>no³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to come</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>lo 11(4)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buffalo</td>
<td>-ho¹</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I made a mistake in including the word for 'old' as an example of final -13. I believe it should be final -12. Wang gives the Wenjie form of this word as [qo 55(5)], with [o] rather than [a]. Wang's form agrees with other examples of final -12: Wenjie [mpjo 35(1)] 'green', [so 1] 'on', [kho 33(2)] 'nine', [Nqo 3] 'rice bread', [Nqo 35(1)] 'pigeon'. Therefore the form [qa 5] in Mao, Meng, and Zheng may be a misprint.

Wang's final -18:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Na-e</th>
<th>Wenjie</th>
<th>Xishanjie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wine</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>tɔ́vr 31(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>tɔ́y¹</td>
<td>thɔ́r 31(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correct</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pair</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>ɲ́kɔ́ 32(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white</td>
<td>kuà⁴</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper</td>
<td>dɔ́²</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to open</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6) 'sun/day' does not rhyme with 'son', 'horn', etc.; Wenjie [tɔ́ 35(1)] 'son', [tɔ́ 35(1)] (classifier), [qɔ́ 35(1)] 'horn', [qɔ́ 35(1)] 'star', [tɔ́ 55(5)] 'break' versus [pɛ́ 35(1)] 'sun, day'.

6. Mienic versus non-Mienic

Final glottal stop merges with tone C:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wenjie</th>
<th>Mien (Chiang Rai)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sleep (C1)</td>
<td>pɔ́ 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>six (*-ʔ)</td>
<td>tɔ́u 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hundred (*-ʔ)</td>
<td>pe 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weave (D1)</td>
<td>nta 53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I said that if Benedict's Austro-Tai etymology for *mpai C 'pig' was correct, then this form already existed in Proto-Hmong-Mien and did not imply any special relationship among Hmongic, Pa Hng, Ho Nte, and so on. Unfortunately, I had forgotten that Benedict himself now rejects an Austro-Tai etymology for *mpai C. Both Benedict (1985:8) and Wang (1985b:34) have now suggested that the word may be related to Archaic Chinese  المعارضة *pɔ́'A 'sow, pig' (GSR 39d).

If this etymology is correct, and if we accept the view of Chinese linguists that Hmong-Mien is genetically related to Chinese, then the original argument holds: *mpai C goes back to Proto-Sino-Tibetan, therefore, a fortiori, it goes back to Proto-Hmong-Mien, therefore it is a shared inheritance in the non-Mienic branches, not a shared innovation.

On the other hand, if we accept Benedict's view that the Hmong-Mien words which have Chinese cognates are loans,
then the loan *mpai C is a shared innovation uniting the non-
Mienic branches.

In this connection I should mention that Benedict has
also suggested a possible external source for Mienic *duŋ B
'pig'. He says that there are similar looking forms in
the Karenic languages (Benedict 1985:8).

7. Conclusions

In some respects the new Wenjie material provided by Wang
corroborates the testimony of the old material, particularly
in the development of the finals. It even adds some new evi-
dence, such as the CI tone in 'thousand', shared by Wenjie
and Xishanjie. In other respects the new material introduces
complications which may require changing my conclusions:

(1) The split between velar and uvular initials in Wen-
jie has no parallel in Xishanjie or Na-e.

(2) The word for the numeral 'one' is quite different in
Wenjie and Na-e: Wenjie [jǎu j̱(8)] , Na-e i ḋ.

(3) Wenjie has a prepalatal initial in [tɔu 55(5)]
'six'. It does not share the distinctive velar initial of
Na-e ku ʒ.

(4) 'Mushroom' has a uvular initial in Wenjie versus a
prepalaletal initial in Xishanjie. If the variation between
prepalaletal and uvular/velar initials occurs even within Pa
Hng, I may have been wrong to use it as an argument for sepa-
rating Pa Hng from Hmongic.

The discrepancies between Na-e and Wenjie (e.g. 'six')
or between Na-e and Xishanjie (e.g. 'fruit') have at least
three possible explanations:

(1) They are errors in Bonifacy. We should forget about
Na-e until more accurately recorded material becomes
available.

(2) Na-e is a member of the Pa Hng group that has under-
gone some aberrant local developments that are of no
significance for the overall classification and sub-
grouping of Hmong-Mien. For example, the velar ini-
tial of 'six' might have an explanation purely in-
ternal to Na-e, such as analogy or avoidance of
homophony.

(3) Benedict is right that the first split in the Hmong-
Mien family was between Na-e and everything else.
Subsequently, however, Na-e came into intensive con-
tact with Pa Hng, borrowed many words from it, and
shared some areal phonological developments with it.

In other words, I am suggesting as a third possibility
that Na-e may not really be a member of the Pa Hng group
after all. If Benedict is right that Na-e is something very distinctive within the Hmong-Mien family, then the position of Na-e in Hmong-Mien might be analogous to the position of Saek in Tai.

Saek is a Tai language spoken in a small area in Thailand and Laos. It is generally considered to be a geographically displaced member of the Northern branch of Tai (the rest of the Northern branch is found in China and a few places along the northern border of Vietnam), but it has certain peculiarities that suggest that Saek may originally have been a wholly separate subdivision of Tai which later came into intensive contact with Northern Tai.

The difference is that for Saek we have thousands of words recorded with meticulous accuracy by William J. Gedney, whereas for Na-e we have 150 words recorded with highly dubious accuracy by Bonifacy. So we are back where we started: "in urgent need of more data on the language".