

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 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 piē 1 diē 1 'younger sister'), [Nqħē 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, 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 [ɣ̃], with tone A1: Wenjie [pa 31(3)] ɣ̃ 35(1)] 'Pa Hng', Xishanjie [hɣ̃ 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)] ɣ̃ 35(1)] related to the Vietnamese name Pàthēn? And what is the source of the name Nā-é?

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

	Na-e	Wenjie	Xishanjie
bean	---	---	tu 31(8)
iron	du ³ [d̥u]	tu 55(5)	tu 55(5)
six	ku ³	tu 55(5)	tu 55(5)
mouth	---	tu 33(2)	tu 33(2)
ten	ku ¹	ku 32(8)	ku 31(8)
blind*	ku ¹	---	---

But 'to drink' has [ɔ]:

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

This word may be a recent loan from Chinese. Compare Cantonese [hɔ: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.

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 [ntpe 31(3)] 'blood',
- *mp- > mp-: [mpe 55(5)] 'pig', [mpjo 35(1)] 'green',
 [nte 31(3)] 'to wash (hands)', [ntpe 31(3)] 'early',
 [nti 35(1)] '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', [ntphu 33(2)] 'mouth',
 [pkhr 32(8)] 'pair', [Nqhε 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 [-f-]: 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 [nhε 31(4)] 'lazy', both from *ng-. Note also Wenjie [lhja 31(4)] 'to flow', from *NGL-.

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, [h], in all lower register tones, including D2:

- A2: [phr 33(2)] 'flower', [mphjo 33(2)] 'leaf', [nhε 33(2)] 'eat', [tphs 33(2)] 'door', [lhi 33(2)] 'farmland',
 [khu 33(2)] 'nine', [ph 33(2)] 'cow', [ntphu 33(2)] 'mouth', [nho 33(2)] 'boat, ship', [Nqhε 33(2)] 'flesh',
 [kwfr 33(2)] 'yellow'.
- B2: [mhi 31(4)] 'horse', [vhiε 31(4)] 'boiler', [thr 31(4)] 'fire', [nhu 31(4)] 'he, she, it', [nhε 31(4)] 'lazy',
 [lhja 31(4)] 'flow'.
- C2: [mhi 44(6)] 'sell', [mphjo 44(6)] 'nose', [tfe 44(6)] 'die', [tpha 44(6)] 'seven'.
- D2: [vhiε 32(8)] 'ten thousand' (D2 in Pa Hng and some Hmongic languages; generally C2), [mphI 32(8)] 'peppery',
 [jhi 32(8)] 'eight', [khu 32(8)] 'ten', [pkhr 32(8)] 'pair', [jhu 32(8)] 'one' (compare Mien [jet 12(8)]).

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

A2: [-mp^hio 2] 'ear'

B2: [-p^hu 4] 'hand; arm', [-t^hr 4] 'fire', [-p^hi 4] 'head'

C2: [-m^hi 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 [ɸ].

Thus I interpret Bonifacy's mhu 1 'bird' as [m^hu] and assert that the [ɸ] 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 mhu 1. 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':

	Proto-Hmongic	Wenjie
seven	*dz-	tɕhã 44(6)
blood	*ɾtɕh-	ɳtɕe 31(3)
door	*dɿ-	tɕhɿ̃ 33(2)
fir	*tɕ-	tɕĩ 35(1)
thrush	*tɕ-	tɕɿ̃ 35(1)
wine	*tɕ-	tɕɿ 31(3)
mouth	*ɳdɕ-	ɳtɕɕu 33(2)
six	*tɿ̃ _o -	tɕu 55(5)

5. Evidence for separating Pa Hng from Hmongic

(1) Proto-Hmongic dentals = Pa Hng dentals: Wenjie
 [tɿ̃ 35(1)] 'earth', [tẽ 35(1)] 'skirt', [tɿ̃ 35(1)] 'son',
 [tɕhɿ̃ 31(4)] 'fire', [tɕhẽ 44(6)] 'die', [nẽ 35(1)] 'snake',
 [nɿ̃ 55(5)] 'cold', [ɳe 35(1)] 'sun, day', [ɳe 35(1)] 'ear of

grain', [nɦu 31(4)] 'he, she, it', [nɦɔ 33(2)] 'eat',
[ntɪ 35(1)] 'cloth', [nta 53(7)] 'weave', [lɔ 35(1)] (clas-
sifier), [a 55(5)] 'moon', [ɬu 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 紵 *dɦio B (a kind

of hemp) (GSR 84e; see also Chen and Li 1981, 1'7). If we accept the view of Chinese linguists that Hmong-Mien is genetically 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 bó 3 is completely 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 possible 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 already taken place.

I am not prepared at the present time to enter the controversy 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 prepalatals:
Wenjie [tɕi 35(1)] 'fir', [tɕɔ 35(1)] 'thrush', [tɕɛ 31(3)]
'wine', [nɪ 35(1)] 'wife', [ntɕɦu 33(2)] 'mouth', [tɕɦi 32(8)]
'eight'.

Proto-Hmongic prepalatals = Pa Hng velars or uvulars:

Velar: Wenjie [kɦo 33(2)] 'nine', [ŋɦ 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 Xishan jie have a prepalatal initial: Wenjie [tɕu 55(5)], Xishan jie [tɕu 55(5)].

(4) Wang's final -13:

	Na-e	Wenjie	Xishan jie	Gundong
to see	vā ¹ -	---	---	---
mouth	-lhā ³	---	la 55(5)	---
strength	---	---	jæ 44(6)	---
to weave	---	nta 53(7)	næ 54(7)	na ⁷
to laugh	tā ¹	---	tɕæ 54(7)	---
duck	---	---	ʔæ 54(7)	---
to see	-pā ²	---	pa 31(8)	---
thunder	bō ²	---	---	---
deep	---	---	to 34(1)	---
big	---	ɬjo 35(1)	---	---
early	---	ntɕo 31(3)	---	no ³
to come	---	---	lo 11(4)	---
buffalo	-hō ¹	---	---	---

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', [kfo 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:

	Na-e	Wenjie	Xishanjie
wine	---	tɕɿ 31(3)	tɕɿ 22(3)
fire	tɕ ¹	tɕɿ 31(4)	tɿ 11(4)
correct	---	---	ɣɿ 54(7)
pair	---	ɣkɿ 32(8)	---
white	kuə ⁴	---	kuo 34(1)
paper	dɕ ²	---	---
to open	---	---	pɕ 54(7)

(6) 'sun/day' does not rhyme with 'son', 'horn', etc.:
 Wenjie [tɕ 35(1)] 'son', [lɕ 35(1)] (classifier), [qɕ 35(1)]
 'horn', [qɕ 35(1)] 'star', [tɕ 55(5)] 'break' versus
 [ɲe 35(1)] 'sun, day'.

6. Mienic versus non-Mienic

Final glottal stop merges with tone C:

	Wenjie	Mien (Chiang Rai)
sleep (C1)	pɿ 55	pwei 25
six (*-?)	tɕu 55	cu? 55
hundred (*-?)	pe 55	pɕ? 55
weave (D1)	nta 53	dat 55

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 豕 *pa^{QA} '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 evidence, such as the Cl 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 Wenjie has no parallel in Xishanjie or Na-e.
- (2) The word for the numeral 'one' is quite different in Wenjie and Na-e: Wenjie [jɤu 32(8)], Na-e i 1.
- (3) Wenjie has a prepalatal initial in [tɕa 55(5)] 'six'. It does not share the distinctive velar initial of Na-e ku 3.
- (4) 'Mushroom' has a uvular initial in Wenjie versus a prepalatal initial in Xishanjie. If the variation between prepalatal and uvular/velar initials occurs even within Pa Hng, I may have been wrong to use it as an argument for separating 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 undergone some aberrant local developments that are of no significance for the overall classification and subgrouping of Hmong-Mien. For example, the velar initial of 'six' might have an explanation purely internal 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 contact 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".