

# GRAMMATICAL FEATURES SHARED BY HMONG-MIEN AND AUSTRONESIAN

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# Taking Hmong-Mien into account

- Sino-Tibetan c. 1.6 billion
- Austronesian c. 270 million
- Austroasiatic c. 101 million
- Tai-Kadai c. 78 million
- Hmong-Mien c. 9 million

## Location

Discontinuous territory

Central: Hmong-Mien and  
Tai-Kadai

West: Tibeto-Burman

North: Chinese

East: Austronesian

South: Tai-Kadai and  
Mon-Khmer



# Proposals for HM affiliation

- Greater Sino-Tibetan
  - Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Hmong-Mien
- Austro-Tai (Benedict 1975)
  - Austronesian, Tai-Kadai, Hmong-Mien
- Yangzian (Haudricourt 1966, Peiros 1998, Starosta 2005)
  - Austroasiatic, Hmong-Mien
- East Asian (Starosta 2005)
  - Sino-Tibetan, Yangzian, Austronesian, Tai-Kadai

# Overview

- Stable vocabulary
- Stative/causative morphology
- Personal pronouns
  - 1<sup>st</sup> person singular
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> person
- Atypical mainland grammatical contrasts
  - inclusive/exclusive 1<sup>st</sup> person plural
  - person-based spatial deixis

## Stable/basic roots in both families

	PAN	PHM
full	*penuq	*pυεηX
to throw, shoot	*panaq	*pənX
flower	*buŋa	*ḅiaŋ
bird	*manuk	*m-nɔk



# Any other pairs?

- No . . . but at the AN level, Blust reconstructs only 5 \*ma-/\*pa- pairs and only 1 more at the MP level.
- Individual words with ma-? Low-register stative verbs and adjectives are candidates.
- One possibility:

	PMP	PHM
soft	ma-lumu	*mluεjH



# Personal Pronouns

Proto-Hmong-Mien (Ratliff 2010)

	Singular	Plural
1st	ku(N)	N-pou
2nd	m̥ɛi	m̥jəu
3rd	ŋjæn	--

Proto-Austronesian short-form  
(genitive) pronouns (Blust 1977)

	Singular	Plural
1st	i-ku/ni-ku	i-ta/ni-ta i-mi/ni-mi
2nd	i-Su/ni-Su	i-mu/ ni-mu
3rd	i-a/ni-a	i-Da/ni-Da

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# 1<sup>st</sup> person singular \*ku(N) : \*-ku

- Hmongic \*kɛŋ<sup>B</sup> and Biao Min /kəu<sup>3</sup>/, /kɔ<sup>3</sup>/
- HM \*k- > H \*q- unless followed by \*o, \*u, \*l, \*r;  
\*k does not retract, so original vowel rounded.
- Also Proto-Tai k̄iəu<sup>A</sup> (Li 1977), Proto-Kra \*ku<sup>A</sup> (Ostapirat 2000), Proto-Katuic \*k̄i (Sidwell 2005).

## 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular \* $\eta$ iæn : \*ni-a

- In HM, 3SG \* $\eta$ iæn is quite stable, occurring in languages of all branches except North Hmongic.
- Of AN variants \*ni-a and \*i-a, the postvocalic variant \*ni-a exhibited “an overwhelmingly greater survival rate” than the postconsonantal variant \*i-a, leading Dyen to have reconstructed the 3SG as \*ña? (Blust 1977:4-5).

## 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural \*m̩jəu : \*-mu

In several HM languages the 2PL is built upon the 2SG with the addition of a word meaning ‘group’ as in Chinese *nǐ* > *nǐmen*.

	2SG	2PL
Hm-nai	m̩ <sup>31</sup>	m̩ <sup>31</sup> kaŋ <sup>13</sup>
Longhua Jiongnai	maŋ <sup>33</sup>	maŋ <sup>33</sup> kloŋ <sup>53</sup>
Xiaozhang Qo-xiong	m̩ <sup>35</sup>	m̩ <sup>35</sup> dɣ <sup>35</sup>
Iu Mien	mei <sup>31</sup>	mei <sup>31</sup> buə <sup>44</sup>

## 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural \*m̥iəu : \*-mu

- But in some HM languages the 2SG and 2PL are identical due either to
  - the loss of the “group” morpheme in the plural
  - a “politeness shift” from plural to singular as English you<sub>PL</sub> > you<sub>SG</sub>

	2SG	2PL
Wenjie Pa-hng	m̥ɿ (A2)	m̥ɿ <sup>44</sup> (C2)
Gudong Pa-hng	mu <sup>33</sup>	mu <sup>33</sup>

## 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural \*m̥iəu : \*-mu

- In yet other languages, 2SG (\*m̥ei) is similar to 2PL (\*m̥iəu), but has a different rime:

	2SG	2PL
Jiwei Qo-xiong	mɯ <sup>42</sup>	me <sup>42</sup>
Yangmeng Qo-xiong	moŋ <sup>31</sup>	mɛ <sup>31</sup>
Zhongxin Qo-xiong	mɯ <sup>35</sup>	mi <sup>35</sup>
Danqing Qo-xiong	mu <sup>31</sup>	mi <sup>31</sup>

- Is the similarity an indication of an earlier politeness shift?

# Personal Pronouns

Proto-Hmong-Mien (Ratliff 2010)

	Singular	Plural
1st	ku(N)	N-pou
2nd	m̥ei	m̥iəu
3rd	niæn	--

Proto-Malayo-Polynesian  
short-form pronouns (Blust 1977)

	Singular	Plural
1st	i-ku/ni-ku	i-ta/ni-ta i-mi/ni-mi
2nd	i-mu/ ni-mu (polite)	i-mu/ ni-mu
3rd	i-a/ni-a	i-Da/ni-Da



## Is Hmong-Mien “Muic”?

- A politeness shift of \*-mu from 2PL > 2SG was a MP innovation (Blust 1977).
- The \*manuk word for ‘bird’ was also a MP innovation (cf. AN \*qayam ‘bird’ ): MP \*manu-manuk, HM \*m-nək, Proto-Tai \*nok, Proto-Kra \*ŋok.
- Sagart first placed TK and MP in the “Muic” branch of AN on the basis of these two shared innovations (Sagart 2005), so HM may belong here too.

# Atypical mainland contrasts [\*see notes\*]

- an inclusive/exclusive 1PL contrast
- a person-oriented demonstrative contrast (this near me, that near you, that near neither)
- An empirical question: how frequently are these contrasts innovated? Borrowing is not a good explanation here.
- Perhaps these are old grammatical contrasts that have been renewed in different ways in different languages.

# Mapping 1PL inclusive/exclusive

- In South Asia (Dravidian and Munda) and in Northeast Asia (> northern Chinese), but not common in mainland Southeast Asia. “*Off the Asian mainland, the inclusive/exclusive distinction is regularly attested. This is mainly due to the Austronesian languages*” (Cysouw, WALS).
- The inclusive/exclusive contrast “is nearly universal in AN languages” (Blust 2009:304).

# A cognate construction?

HM	1PL exclusive	1PL inclusive
Longhua Jiongnai	va <sup>31</sup> klon <sup>53</sup>	taŋ <sup>31</sup> klon <sup>53</sup>
Hainan Mun	ʔbuu <sup>13</sup>	ʔban <sup>13</sup>
SEA Iu Mien	jiə <sup>44</sup> buə <sup>44</sup>	buə <sup>44</sup>

Kam-Sui	1PL exclusive	1PL inclusive
Lakkja	ta <sup>2</sup>	tau <sup>1</sup>
Chadong	lje <sup>1</sup>	la:u <sup>1</sup>
Kam	tɕiu <sup>55</sup>	tau <sup>55</sup>
Sui	ndiu <sup>1</sup>	nda:u <sup>1</sup>

## 3-way person-oriented demonstrative contrast

- “The vast majority of the world’s languages employ two or three distance-marked demonstratives: 54.3 two-way contrast between proximal and distal referents and 37.6% have adnominal demonstratives that differentiate between three referents. The majority of the latter have a distance-oriented system. Person-oriented systems seem to be less common: only one third have been classified as person-oriented.”  
(Diessel, WALS)
- Only 12.5% of languages in the WALS database have person-oriented demonstratives.
- Yet common in AN: PAN \*i-Cu ‘that (2PL)’; \*-na ‘that’ (3SG/PL).

## Another cognate construction?

In HM, the second-person demonstrative has been adapted from different morphemes in those languages for which it has been recorded.

	this near me	that near you	that neutral/far
White Hmong	no <sup>33</sup>	ko <sup>33</sup> (< 'you')	ntaw <sup>214</sup>
Meizhu Bu-nu	nau <sup>43</sup>	kau <sup>12</sup> (< 'you')	uŋ <sup>33</sup>
Yanghao Hmu	noŋ <sup>35</sup>	nen <sup>35</sup> (< 's/he')	moŋ <sup>55</sup> (< 'you')
Iu Mien	naai <sup>453</sup>	naai <sup>11</sup> (< 'this')	wuə <sup>453</sup>

# Conclusion

- The evidence for a HM/AN relationship is very slight, but it involves basic grammatical elements.
- It is not less significant than the evidence proposed for a TK/AN relationship.
- In many cases — the pronouns, ‘bird’, ‘die/kill’— it is the *same* evidence. Austro-Tai?
- But then why are HM and TK otherwise so dissimilar?