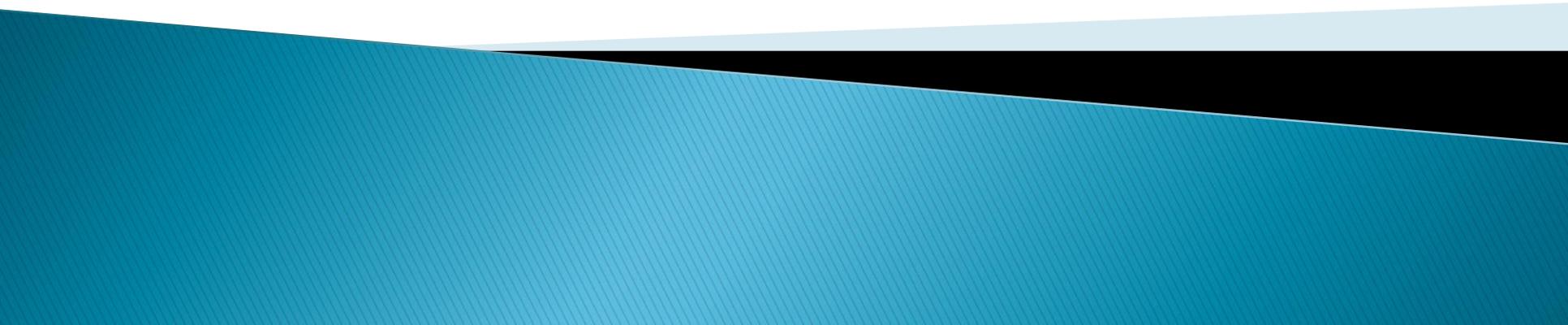


The Biao languages of NW Guangdong, China

Andrew Hsiu

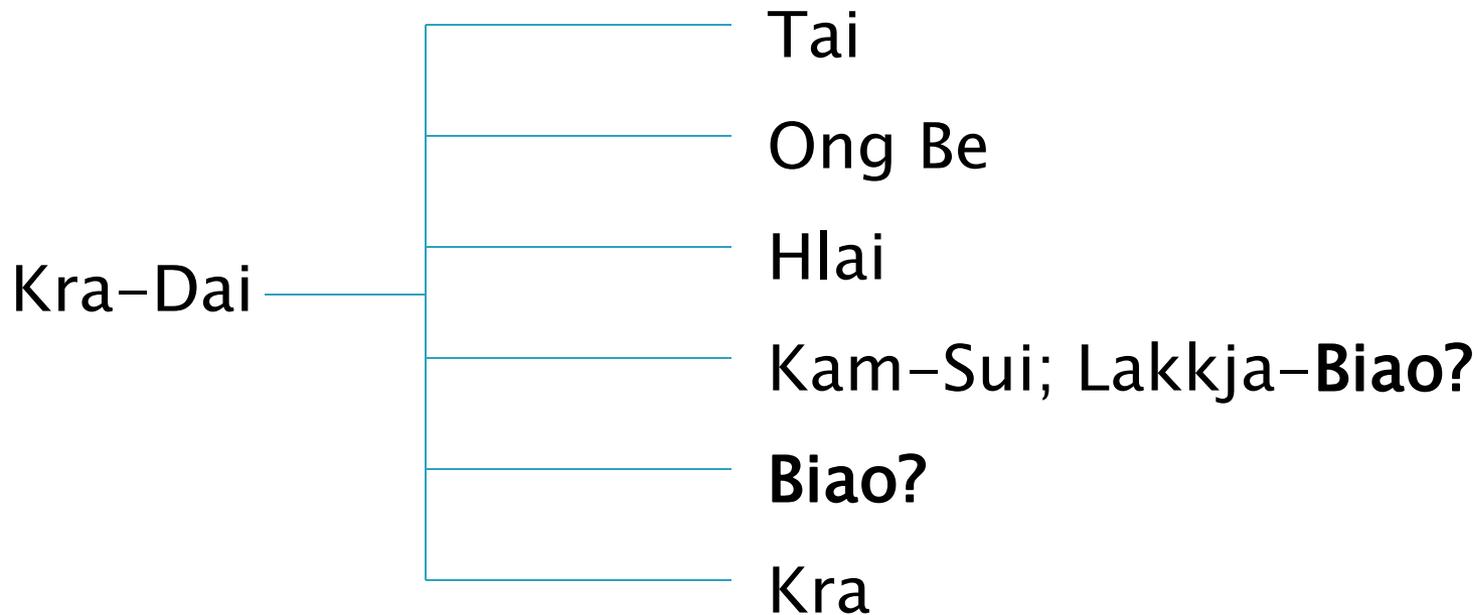
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May 27–31, 2014



Kra–Dai (Tai–Kadai) branches

- ▶ 4 major branches commonly accepted:
Tai, Hlai, Kam–Sui, Kra
- ▶ Others (uncertain): Ong Be, Saek, Lakkja, Biao



Biao is in NW Guangdong, southern China

Source: Wikimedia Commons



Introduction

- ▶ Autonym: **koŋ⁵³pju³³** (in Dagang Town)
- ▶ Spoken just NW of Guangzhou in:
 - **Huaiji County**, Guangdong (majority)
 - **Fengkai County**, Guangdong (2 townships)
 - **Hezhou**, Guangxi (a few villages)
- ▶ Speakers: **150,000** (Yang Biwan 2011)
- ▶ **Vigorous** language use, spoken by all ages
- ▶ Officially all ethnic **Han**
- ▶ Easily accessible **lowland locations**
- ▶ Yet, many varieties are **undescribed** (except Shidong)

People

- ▶ Ethnically self-identify as simply another Han Chinese group
 - ▶ No ethnic minority clothing or visible customs
 - ▶ Only their language is non-Han Chinese (which they generally do not realize), which has many Yue Chinese loanwords as well.
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Why Biao?

- ▶ **Least documented internal variety** among major Kra–Dai (KD) subgroups
 - Tai, Ong Be, Kra, [core] Kam–Sui, Lakkja, and Biao
 - ▶ Located closest to KD homeland: Pearl River Delta region
 - ▶ Unique forms within KD that may be crucial for PKD reconstruction and subgrouping (e.g., tshan1 ‘rain’)
- 

KD riverine dispersal: up the Pearl River watershed

Author map



Internal diversity of Biao

- 3 mutually unintelligible languages:
- ▶ **1. Shidong Biao 诗洞 (55,000)**
 - *Liandu 莲都 (1,300)*
 - *He'erkou 河儿口 (1,750)*
 - *Shatian 沙田 (20)*

 - ▶ **2. Yonggu Biao 永固 (40,000)**

 - ▶ **3. Northwestern Biao (65,000)**
 - *Dagang 大岗 (30,000)*
 - *Qiaotou 桥头 (10,000)*
 - *Liangcun 梁村 (18,000)*
 - *Chang'an 长安 (7,000)*

Previous work

- ▶ ***Shidong Biao***: documented in Liang Min (2002)
 - Grammar, texts, and 1,500-word list

New data (previously no extensive documentation)

I collected new data from 2 more closely languages in May 2013.

- ▶ **1. *Yonggu Biao***: Between Shidong and NW Biao areas. Several words documented in Liang Min (2002).
- ▶ **2. *NW Biao***: I have personally observed Biao speakers from Dagang and Chang'an talking to each other without problems. Several words documented in the *Fengkai County Gazetteer* (1998).

Datapoints

1. **Shidong Township** 诗洞镇, Huaiji County (Liang Min 2002)
2. **Yonggu Township** 永固镇, Huaiji County, Guangdong Province (field notes 2013)
3. **Zhailing Village** 寨岭村, **Dagang Township** 大岗镇, Huaiji County, Guangdong Province (field notes 2013)
4. **Baoshan Village** 保山村, **Chang'an Township** 长安镇, Fengkai County, Guangdong Province (field notes 2013)

Some initial correspondences

NW Biao is in many ways most conservative;
only one to preserve:

*s-

*k-

etc.

Proto-Biao	Shidong	Yonggu	NW	Examples
*s-	θ	θ	s	three, star
*tʂ-	θ	θ	tʂ	hair, back
*k-	ts/_i	tʂ/_u	k/_i	l

Importance of documenting Biao internal diversity: *Forms with different etymologies*

Gloss	Shidong	Yonggu	Dagang	Chang'an
liver	<i>kɔŋ3</i>	ɲien53	<i>kun53</i>	ɲin423
tongue	<i>tshu1</i>	ɲen33 phyə55	li53	<i>tɕə53 tɕit35</i>
to kill	thɔŋ1	<i>sat55</i>	khə33	thɕuŋ55
meat	nɔn4, ŋa:u4	tɕiə33	<i>ɲok53</i>	mou33 tɕiə53
head louse	jɔ2	jau53	<i>tou33 sat55</i>	kou33 tɕo55
black	<i>muk7</i>	thoŋ53	hin22	tɕhom53

Italics: Yue Chinese loanwords

Importance of documenting Biao internal diversity:

Forms with different etymologies

- ▶ ‘liver’: Yonggu *nien53*, Chang’an *nin423* < PHM **hneunX* ‘intestines’ (rather unexpected!)
- ▶ ‘tongue’: Yonggu *phyə55* related to Kam–Sui **ma2*?; but Dagang *li53* < Tai **li:n C*
- ▶ ‘to kill’: Dagang *khə33* < Tai **qa: C* / Kam–Sui #*ya3*; Shidong *thɔŋ1*, Chang’an *thɛun55* are innovations
- ▶ ‘meat’: Shidong *nɔn4* < Kam–Sui **na:n4*; Yonggu *tɕiə33*, Chang’an *mou33 tɕiə53* are innovations

Forms shared only with Lakkja, but not other KD

Gloss	Biao	Lakkja	P–Kam–Sui	P–Tai
leg	puk7	puk7	*kwa1, *ti:n1	*p.qa: A
road	ti6 tsɔŋ1	tsa:ŋ1	#khwən1	* ^h rwɔn A
neck	lak8 ŋen1	kan3 ʔɛn1	*ɣo1	*ɣo: A
house	lɔk10	lie:k8	*hra:n1	*rɣ:n A
stone	ta1 pɔŋ2	fa:ŋ1	*pra1	*tri:l A
to cry	ta1 phɔ1	piẽ1	*ʔne3	*t.haj C
heavy	tshak7	tsak7	#zan1	* ^h nak D

P–Kam–Sui: starred forms from Thurgood (1988), forms with pound signs are my own preliminary quasi-reconstructions.

P–Tai: from Pittayaporn (2009)

Forms cognate with Tai

- ▶ ‘to eat’: Yonggu kun33 < PT *kɯŋ A
- ▶ ‘blood’: Dagang lyt11 < PT *lɯət D
- ▶ ‘salt’: Dagang luə53 < PT *klwəə A
- ▶ ‘tongue’: Dagang li53 < PT *li:n C

Dagang has been in contact with Tai? Or are these retentions?

Forms cognate with Kam–Sui

While others apparently have Kam–Sui cognates.

- ▶ ‘hand’: Yonggu $\eta am33 \ ?i\grave{a}53 < PKS *k-mja1$; but also in Kra
- ▶ ‘nose’: $ka\eta2 \ \eta a\eta3 < PKS *?na\eta1$
- ▶ ‘snake’: $tshy1 < PKS *dzu:i2$
- ▶ ‘painful’: $k\epsilon t9 < PKS \#kit7$
- ▶ ‘sky’: $man1 < PKS *bun1$
- ▶ ‘needle’: $tsham1 < PKS \#tsh\grave{a}m1$
- ▶ ‘fish’: $ma:i6 < PKS *mprai3$

Forms unique to Biao

But, many more words are NOT shared with Lakkja and other KD. Forms are Shidong unless otherwise indicated.

- ▶ ‘head’: Shidong *ha6 lo5*, Yonggu *lo33 mu33*
- ▶ ‘eye’: Shidong *θo1 θian3*,
Yonggu *jam33 tsɔ55*
- ▶ ‘to sleep’: *han5*
- ▶ ‘to buy’: *ɔ1*
- ▶ ‘near’: Shidong *a5*, Dagang *ŋe33*

Unique Biao reflexes

- ▶ ‘to steal’: Shidong *θak8*; Tai *Ç.lak D; KS *hljak7
- ▶ ‘dog’: Shidong *mu3*; Tai *^hma:; KS *k-hma1
- ▶ ‘leaf’: Shidong *mai5*; Tai *ɓaw A; KS *pwa5
- ▶ ‘rain’: Shidong *tshan1*; Tai *Ç.wun A; KS *xwin1; Kra *jəl A
- ▶ ‘moon’: Shidong *phyn1*; Tai *ɓlwən A; KS *nüa:n1' or #mla:n1
- ▶ ‘day’: Dagang *maŋ53*; Tai *ŋwan A; KS *hŋwan1

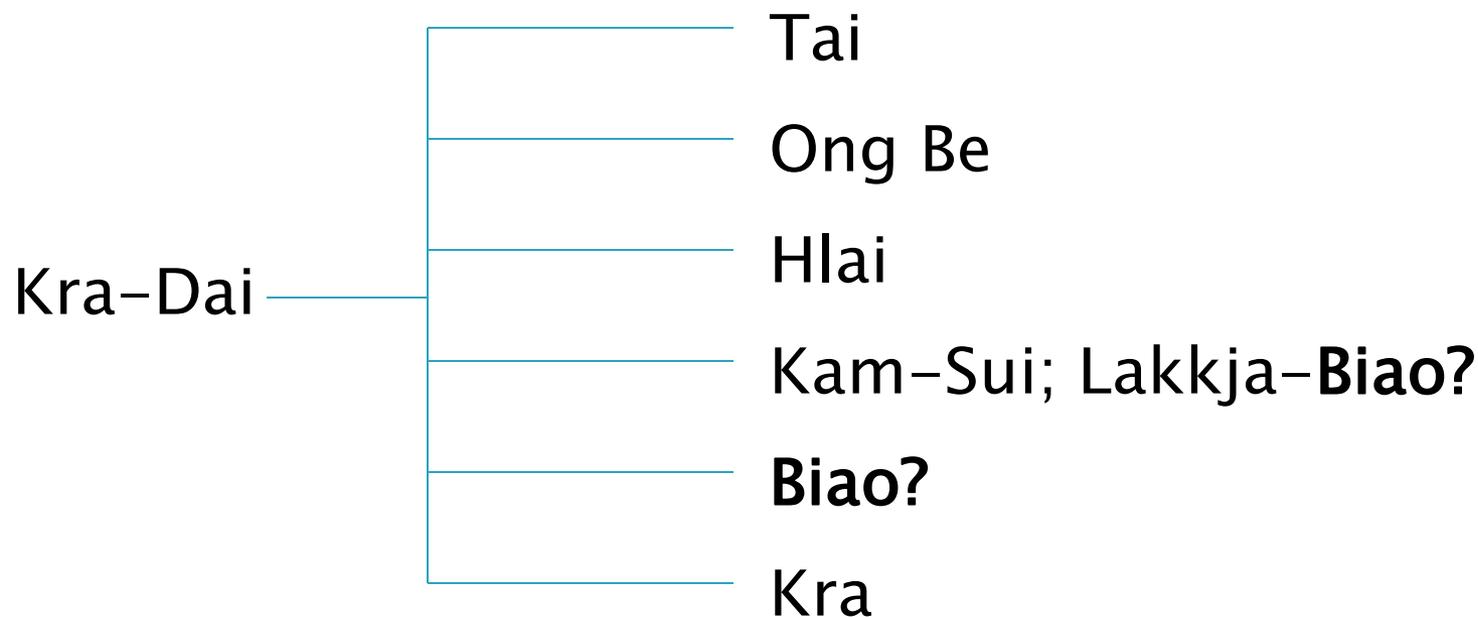
Classification

Possibilities

- ▶ 1. Biao forms a **subgroup with Lakkja**, with Biao–Lakkja constituting an outer subgroup of greater Kam–Sui. (cf. Khasic and Palaungic)
 - The Lakkja and Kam (Dong) claim that their ancestors had migrated from further to the east in Guangdong.
- ▶ 2. Biao is an **independent primary branch** of KD (like Tai and Kra) that has borrowed from earlier forms of Lakkja and Kam–Sui (before they had migrated westward from the Pearl River Delta).

Possible KD tree

- ▶ Based on my analyses of comparative spreadsheets
- ▶ Cf. Sidwell & Blench (2011): Austroasiatic riverine dispersal with a flat array (“rake”) tree



What next?

- ▶ Proto-Biao reconstruction needed
 - ▶ New reconstruction of Proto-Kam-Sui
 - ▶ Lengthy word lists needed for Yonggu Biao and NW Biao
 - ▶ Computational analysis of KD branches using MrBayes, SplitsTree, etc.
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