

“Shui” varieties of western Guizhou and Yunnan

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Background

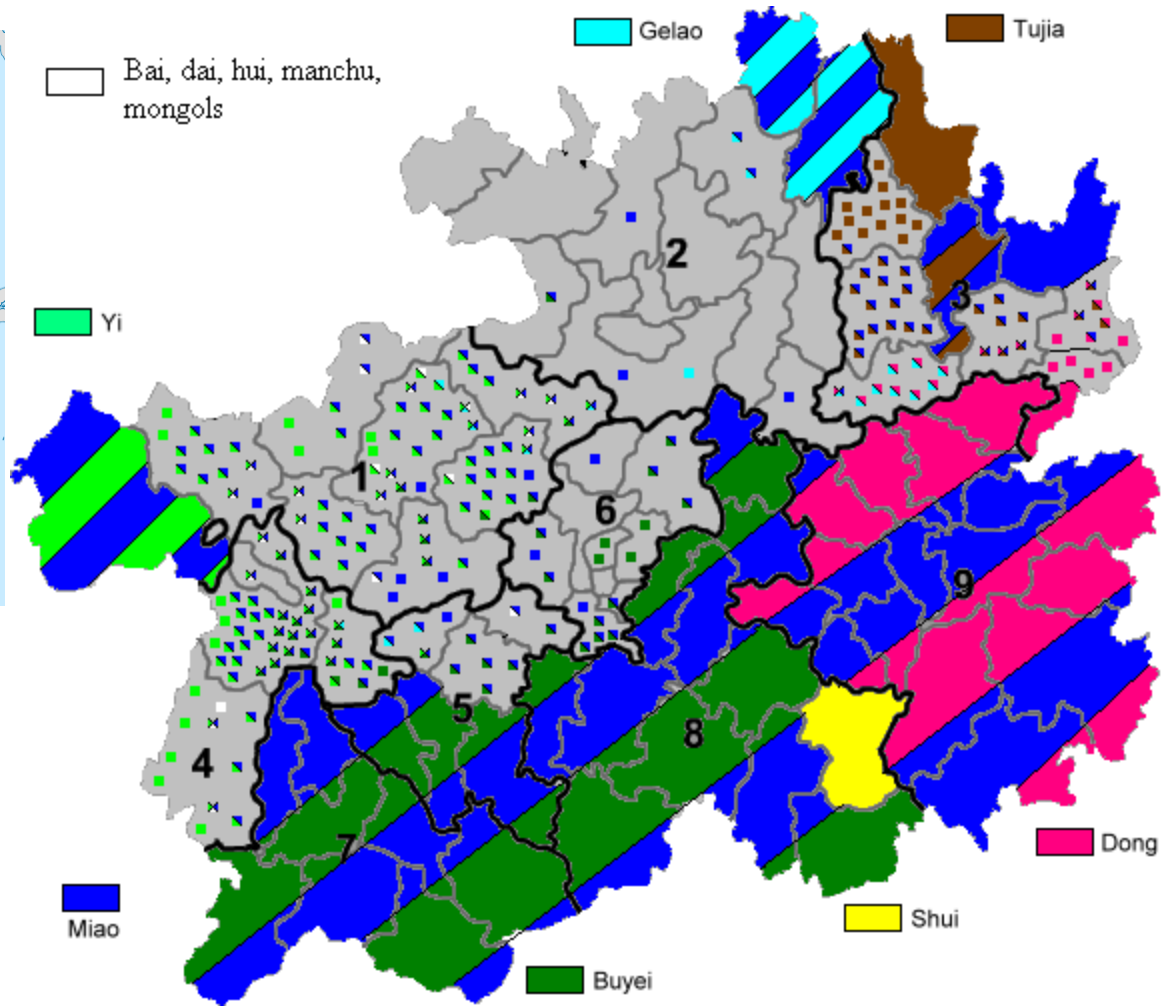
- Shui: one of the 56 officially recognized ethnic groups in China; around 400,000 people classified as Shui
- Over 90% of all Shui people live in and around Sandu Shui Autonomous County in south-central Guizhou, China
 - Their language, Sui, is in the Kam-Sui branch of Kra-Dai (Tai-Kadai).
- However, there are small pockets of people classified as “Shui” in western Guizhou and eastern Yunnan; linguistic situation unknown until now
- No linguistic data, other than Fuyuan Shui – transcribed in Chinese characters by Zhang Xueqin (2009)

Location of Sandu County, Guizhou



Top: Location of Guizhou Province in red

Right: Location of Sandu Shui Autonomous County in yellow



Locations of “Shui” varieties studied in April 2013

- **Dazhai** 大寨, Fuchu Township 辅处乡, Hezhang County 赫章县, Guizhou
- **Dawan** 大湾, Jichang Township 鸡场乡, Zhijin County 织金县, Guizhou
- **Suode** 梭得, Jichangping Township 鸡场坪乡, Pan County 盘县, Guizhou
- Upper Abaiji (locally **Aboji**) 上阿白吉村, Laochang Township 老厂乡, Luoping County 罗平县, Yunnan
- **Buzhang** 布掌, Gugan Township 古敢水族乡, Fuyuan County

Location map (Guizhou province)



Summary

ALL turned out to be **Northern Tai** languages.

Dazhai Shui was discovered by accident while I was doing fieldwork on Qixingmin (Luoji) in NW Guizhou.

- **Dazhai** 大寨: ~5 speakers left
- **Dawan** 大湾: a few hundred speakers?
- **Suode** 梭得, Jichangping Township 鸡场坪乡: a few hundred speakers?
- **Aboji** 阿白吉: a few dozen families in the area
- **Buzhang** 布掌: extinct; a few elderly rememberers

All speakers are officially classified as ethnic Shui, except for those in Dawan (currently Buyi; classified as Shui until the 1980's).

1. Dawan Shui (Zhijin County)

- Evidently Northern Tai languages, i.e. Buyi
- They were officially classified as Shui until the 1980's, when they were reclassified as Buyi.
- Ethnic Buyi clothing is now rarely worn in Dawan, and the younger generations speak Buyi with Chinese accents, or not at all.
- The neighboring villages just downhill still say that the residents of Dawan are ethnic “Shui” (水族), although Dawan residents now say they are ethnic “Buyi” (布依族). Neighbors include White Miao and Yi.

2. Suode Shui (Pan County)

- Northern Tai language spoken in Jichangping Township 鸡场坪乡, Pan County 盘县, Guizhou. Fairly similar to Dawan Shui of Zhijin County.
- Recordings of 20 words in Shui of Pan County, made in January 2002, had been kindly provided to me by James Stanford.
- Also locally called “Shui 水,” although their autonym is *pu⁵⁵ti⁵³* (apparently a variation of “Buyi”)
- Some Buyi in western Guizhou have been reported to be known by locals as “Shui 水.”

3. Aboji Shui (Luoping County, Yunnan)

- Several km from Luo'e 罗额, Fuyuan County, where “Shui” is still spoken.
- Late 2000's: Luo'e Shui words transcribed by gov't officials in Chinese characters
- Isolated pockets left; “Shui” is highly endangered in the region
- Aboji vs. Luo'e Shui: many prefixes different, some discrepancies; both are N. Tai



Aboji Shui and Luo'e Shui

<i>Gloss</i>	<i>Upper Aboji</i>	<i>Luo'e (characters)</i>	<i>Luo'e (pinyin)</i>
hair	pein ³³ khau ³⁵	根靠	genkao
eye	tə ³³ ta ⁵⁵	ne达	neda
ear	pa ³³ zi ⁵³	洼wei	wawei
nose	pu ⁵⁵ ʔdan ³³	给当	geidang
mouth	soŋ ⁵⁵ pa ³³	当娜	dangna
neck	ji ³³ xuo ⁵³	咪火	mihuo
hand	ʔə ³³ vun ⁵³	达翁	daweng
knee	mao ⁵⁵ xu ³³	铆挥	maohui
mountain	pu ⁵⁵ po ³³ lo ⁵⁵	给波	geibo
road	tio ⁵⁵ ʔan ³³	掉弯	diaowan
fire	vei ⁵³	惹	re
chicken	tə ³³ kai ⁵⁵	低该	digai
Year	pei ³³	背	bei
Sui people	pu ¹¹ ʔji ³³	剥遇逗唛	boyu douma

4. Dazhai Shui (Hezhang County, Guizhou)

- Divergent Northern Tai language, possibly with a Kra substratum
- Locals reported only 5 fluent speakers left in and around the village
- Informant: Gao Chunjie 高春姐, 84
 - Born in Yuguo village 雨果村, Weining County; moved to Dazhai when she married
 - Reportedly the best native speaker of “Shui” in the village.
- Family genealogical records: ancestors had migrated from Dashiban 大石板, Taihe County 太河县, Fuguang Prefecture 福广府, Jiangxi 江西 (modern location unknown)



Divergent lexical items

Gloss	Dazhai	Dawan	Suode	Aboji
ear	mã ³³ mã ³³	taʔ ³³ wa ³³	pa ³³ zəu ¹¹	pa ³³ zɪ ⁵³
egg	ɲie ²¹ ki ⁵⁵	taen ³³ kei ³⁵	tan ³³ kei ⁵⁵	taen ³³ kai ⁵⁵
fire	ki ⁵⁵	vei ²¹	vei ⁵³	vei ⁵³
fish	teŋ ³³ jo ³⁵	tə ³³ pa ⁵⁵	tə ³³ pa ⁵⁵	tə ³³ pa ⁵⁵
good	zi ¹¹	ʔdei ⁵⁵	kə ⁵⁵ tei ³³	ʔdei ³³ la ⁵³
hand	ka ³³ qəŋ ¹¹	ki ³³ vun ¹¹	tə ³³ vun ¹¹	ʔə ³³ vun ⁵³
meat	ʔbai ⁵⁵	nɦu ³⁵	nuou ³⁵	no ⁵³
nose	mei ⁵⁵ ʔla ³³	tau ³³ dan ³³	pa ³³ dan ³³	pu ⁵⁵ ʔdan ³³
oil	miɛ ³³	zau ²¹	jəu ⁵³	jəu ⁵³
salt	ɲu ⁵⁵ ʔlã ³³	ky ⁵⁵	ku ⁵⁵	ku ⁵⁵
snake	tu ³³ nua ³³	tə ³³ ɲkəu ¹¹	te ³³ ɲɣ ³³	tə ³³ ɲɣ ⁵³
sun	la ⁵⁵ jan ²¹	tae ³³ tan ³³ waen ²¹	dã ³⁵ ta ⁵⁵	to ³³ wae ⁵³
water	a ⁵⁵	zan ²¹	zaen ³³	ðæn ³⁵

Divergent reflexes / cognates

Gloss	Dazhai	Dawan	Suode	Aboji
chicken	tə ³³ ki ⁵⁵	tu ³³ kai ⁵³	tə ³³ kei ⁵⁵	tə ³³ kai ⁵⁵
cry	mu ⁵⁵ thɛ ²¹	ɕiau ⁵⁵ thai ³³	thai ⁵³	thai ³⁵ la ³³
dog	tu ³³ mua ⁵⁵	tə ³³ ma ⁵³	te ³³ ma ⁵⁵	tə ³³ ma ³³
wine	ɬu ²¹	lau ³³	lau ¹¹	lau ³⁵
far	ki ⁵³	kai ⁵⁵	tɕi ³³ kai ⁵⁵	kai ³³ la ⁵³
dust	tu ³⁵	mein ³⁵ tau ³³	tau ³⁵ tshei ³³	tau ³¹ ni ³³
tree	ku ⁵⁵ wein ³³	vai ²¹	ku ⁵⁵ vɛ ³³	kho ³³ vai ³⁵
hair, head	pəŋ ⁵⁵ khəu ²¹	pein ³³ khau ¹¹	pəŋ ³³ khau ¹¹	pein ³³ khau ³⁵
eye	mei ⁵⁵ ta ²¹	tə ³³ tai ³¹	tə ³³ ta ⁵⁵	tə ³³ ta ⁵⁵
intestines	tɕu ³³ sei ¹¹	sai ³³ (tu ³³ wei ¹¹)	sai ³¹	sai ³⁵
year	mi ²¹	pei ³³ ja ³³	pɛ ³³	pei ³³

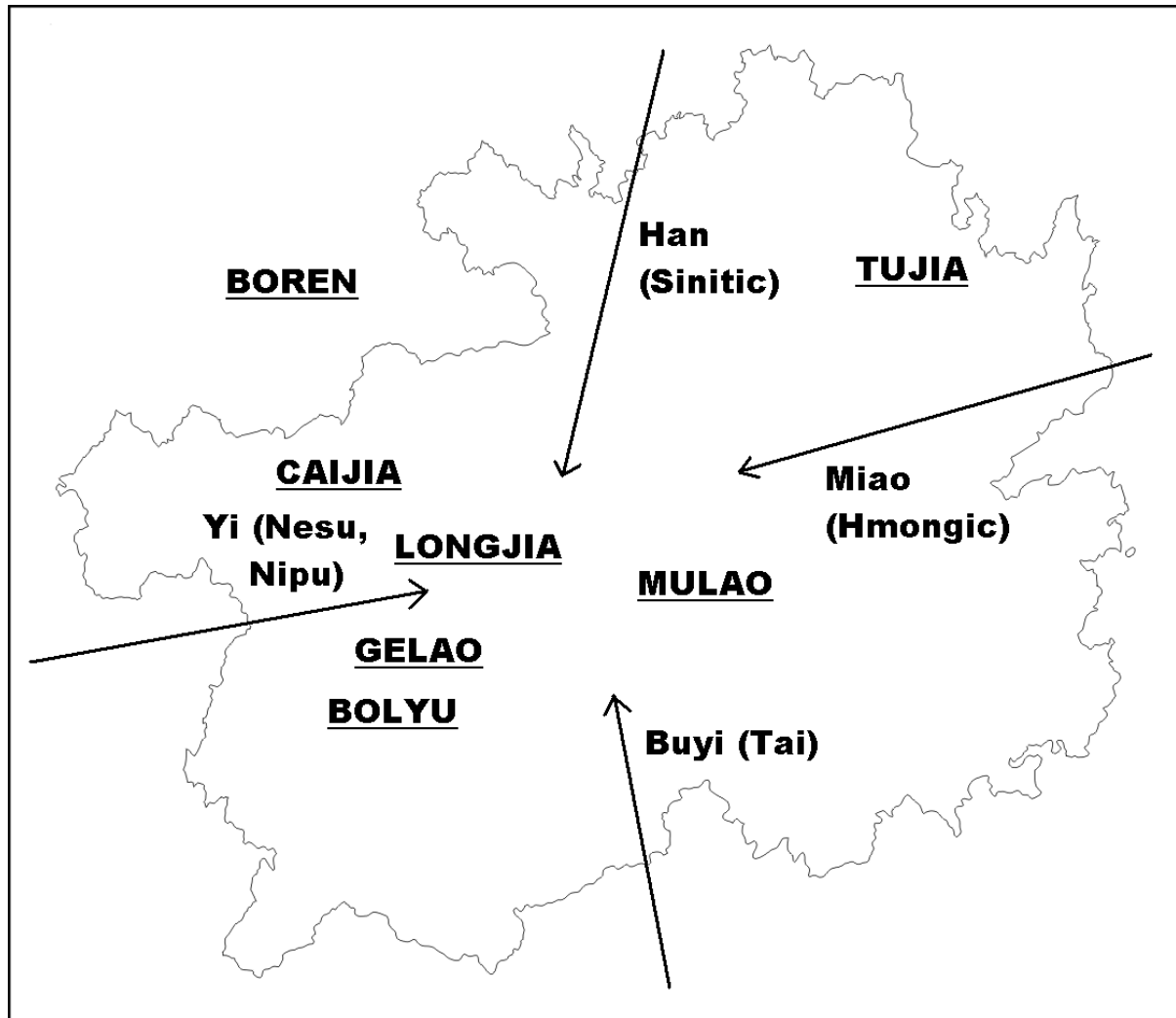
Kra comparisons

- $\eta u^{55} \eta la^{33}$ ‘salt’ < Proto-Kra $*\eta o$ A
 - not from Proto-Tai $*klw\mu\theta$ A
- a^{55} ‘water’ < Proto-Kra $*\eta u\eta$ C. Compare:
 - Gelao (Dagouchang) θw^{55}
 - Buyang (Yalang) $u\theta^{24}$
 - not from Proto-Tai $*C_{\downarrow}nam$ C
- ki^{53} ‘far’ < Proto-Kra $*k-li$ A
 - likely not from Proto-Tai $*k.laj$ A
- $ka^{33} q\theta\eta^{11}$ ‘hand’: compare Paha $ma^{33} q\epsilon^{45}$ (322)
- mi^{21} ‘year’: compare Paha $m\epsilon\eta^{31}$
- $mei^{55} \eta la^{33}$ ‘nose’: compare Mulao $mi^{53} \eta e^{55}$,
Lachi (Jinchang) $mi^{55} \eta a\eta^{53}$

Dazhai Shui: Kra substratum?

- Located far to the northwest of most Northern Tai groups
- Non-Tai substratum evident, and may possibly be Kra; suggests gradual relexification rather than sudden switch
- Possible scenario
 - Originally a Kra-speaking group further to the south
 - Switch to Northern Tai as Tai speakers from Guangxi migrate up north to Guizhou several hundred years ago
 - Migration from SW to NW Guizhou after switch to Tai
- Also, Dazhai is located only a few km from Kele 可乐, a historic capital of Yelang, which likely had Yi/Loloish-speaking rulers and Gelao (Kra) subjects.

Tai: a recent incursion into Guizhou



Upper-case, underlined:
autochthonous
ethnic groups

5. Buzhang Shui (Fuyuan County, Yunnan)

- “Five Shui villages” of Gugan Shui Ethnic Township 古敢水族乡: Buzhang 补掌, Dongla 咚喇, Reshui 热水, Dazhai 大寨, and Duzhang 都章
- Zhang Haixiang 张海翔 (2005) reported that an elderly man in Dongla 咚喇 village, Cha Bizhen 查毕珍, could read the local Shui script and speak the language.
 - Already passed away several years ago; possibly the last semi-speaker
- Rememberer discovered on April 12, 2013: 65-year-old Wu Shangrong 吴尚荣 of Buzhang village 布掌村 who learned some words and phrases from her mother
- Another male informant in his 60’s also remembered the three phrases ‘eat breakfast’, ‘eat lunch’, and ‘eat dinner.’

Buzhang Shui and Bajie Buyi

*Note: Buyi
of Bajie from
Snyder (2007)*

<i>Gloss</i>	<i>Shui of Buzhang</i>	<i>Buyi of Bajie</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
eat	kein ³³	kən ³³	
breakfast	hau ²¹	hɛu ⁴² ŋai ⁴¹ ʒn ɛm ³¹	
lunch	jin ²¹	hɛu ⁴² ziŋ ⁴¹	j : z
dinner	ŋai ⁴²	hɛu ⁴² ɕɛu ⁴²	different form
one	jau ³³	ʔdɛu ³³ , jit ³⁵	
two	soŋ ³³	ŋi ³³ , soŋ ³³	
three	san ³³	sa:m ³³	
four	sei ²⁴	si ²⁴	
five	ha ⁴²	ha ^{3 5}	tonal flip-fop
go	pai ³³	pai ³³	
wine	lau ⁴²	lau ^{3 5}	tonal flip-fop
meat	no ²¹	no ³¹	
to cook	zoŋ ³³	ʒoŋ ³³	
much	to ³³	la:i ³³	different form
few	nai ³³	no:i ^{3 5}	different rime
no, not	mi ²¹	mi ⁴¹	

6. “Shui” of Yiliang County, Yunnan

- Some Shui residents were located in Baiyan village 白岩村, Long'an township 龙安乡, Yiliang County 彝良县.
- The language turned out to be already **extinct**. One word remembered by an elderly Shui man:
 - ka33 tou11 ‘chopsticks’
- He had learned it from his grandparents, and said that the language had already gone extinct “a few generations ago.”
- Family genealogical records: originally from Tái huǒ County, Jǐ ān Prefecture, Jiangxi. Their ancestors then moved to Sandu County for 42 years, and finally to Yiliang County in 1720.

ka³³ tou¹¹ ‘chopsticks’

- Li Fang-kuei reconstructs Proto-Tai **thuu* ‘chopsticks’; also in Proto-Hmong-Mien as **drouH* (Martha Raliff 2010)
- Po-Ai (Northern Tai) form is *tuu: B2*
- However, Middle Chinese is 箸 *djwo C*, but the *ka³³* prefix suggests the language was non-Chinese.
- Northern Tai is most likely, given the “Shui” exonym and geographical distribution of Northern Tai, but we can never know for sure.

Conclusion

- The “Shui” varieties of W. Guizhou and E. Yunnan are Northern Tai. In particular, Dazhai Shui needs further study to determine the sources of its divergent lexicon.
- In China, ethnic groups are often “misclassified.” Groups with unusual locations may be unrelated.
- The case of Dazhai Shui shows that geographically outlying lects are worth studying, as many may have substrata.
- Field work (often salvage) remains an urgent priority for languages in China.

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Thank you!

