

The Niujiaojing dialect of Caijia in Weining County, Guizhou, China

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1. Introduction and background

This paper introduces a newly described conservative dialect of the Caijia language 蔡家语 spoken in Niujiaojing 牛角井村, Yangjie Town 羊街镇, Weining County 威宁县, Guizhou, China, for which a word list is also provided. The Niujiaojing dialect of Caijia has phonetic features that were previously unreported in Caijia, such as retroflex consonants, apical (fricativized) vowels, tense-lax vowel quality contrast, and vowel nasalization. These phonetic features are shared with neighboring languages such as the Gelao languages, which belong to the Kra branch of the Kra-Dai (or Tai-Kadai) language family, West Hmongic languages, and Northern Loloish languages.

1.1. Classification and previous work

Caijia 蔡家 is an unclassified Sino-Tibetan language of northwestern Guizhou, China. Zhengzhang (2010) has suggested based on lexical evidence that Caijia is related to Bai, but further historical-comparative work will be needed before a Caijia-Bai connection can be ascertained. Caijia also displays many Old Chinese loanwords. Guizhou (1984) has demonstrated that Caijia is related to two other Sino-Burman languages of western Guizhou that are now extinct, namely Longjia 龙家 and Luren 卢人.

This paper presents a new dialect of Caijia spoken in northeastern Weining County, Guizhou that displays notable phonetic differences from the dialect of Caijia documented in Bo Wenzhe (2004). Bo's (2004) Caijia dialect was documented from speakers who came from Lijiazhai 李家寨, Xingying 新营村, Xingfa Township 兴发乡, Hezhang County 赫章县, Guizhou, as well as the neighboring village of Caijiayuan 蔡家园, Yakou Village 垭口村, Songlinpo Township 松林坡乡, Hezhang County. The Niujiaojing (Weining County) and Xingfa (Hezhang County) dialects are mutually intelligible, but the Caijia dialect of Weining County that I had documented displays more conservative phonetic features, which could be

crucial for future historical-comparative work on Caijia, Longjia, and Luren. Caijia has also been previously documented in Guizhou (1982, 1984), which is quite similar, if not identical, to the dialect described in Bo (2004). These are the only known sources containing lexical data of Caijia. In this paper, the Caijia dialect of Hezhang County covered in Bo (2004) is referred to as *Xingfa Caijia*, while the Caijia dialect of Weining County that I had documented is referred to as *Niujiuojing Caijia*. My audio recordings of Niujiuojing Caijia are available online at Zenodo.org, and can be cited as Hsiu (2017a). Future fieldwork is necessary for Niujiuojing Caijia, since I had recorded just 74 words. In section 3, a word list of Niujiuojing Caijia is provided in full.

The locations of Niujiuojing Caijia (plotted for Niujiuojingcun 牛角井村 at 27.067103, 104.297492) and Xingfa Cijia (plotted for Lijiazhaizi 李家寨子 at 26.934672, 104.862531) are shown below in Map 1. Bijie City is located to the east of the Caijia locations, Zhaotong City to the west, and Liupanshui City to the south.

Map 1: Locations of Niujiuojing Caijia and Xingfa Caijia



1.2. Background to Niujaojing Caijia

My Caijia informant in Niujaojing 牛角井, Yangjie Town, Weining County, Guizhou, China was an illiterate elderly woman named Wang Jinzhi 王金之 (born 1940), whom I interviewed on April 7, 2013. The Caijia of Niujaojing refer to themselves as *mei²ni³³*, and are locally referred to by other ethnic groups as the *Cai* 蔡 ethnic group (*Caizu* 蔡族).

Caijia locations reported by residents of Niujaojing are Niujaojing 牛角井村, Xinglongchang 兴隆场村, Niuchishui 牛吃水 (reportedly with very fluent Caijia speakers of all generations), and Fadi 发地. In these villages with the exception of Niuchishui 牛吃水, Caijia is not spoken by people under the age of 40, with the best speakers being over the age of 60. I would estimate that there are approximately 500 Caijia speakers in all of these villages combined. I did not visit any of these villages other than Niujaojing.

On April 7, 2013, I had discovered the Niujaojing dialect of Caijia by accident while I was working on Luoji, a previously undocumented Northern Loloish language of Shejie 蛇街村, Yangjie Town 羊街镇, Weining County 威宁县. Additionally, on the same day I had also discovered the Hezhang Buyi language, a divergent Northern Tai language with a Kra substratum, in neighboring Tiejiang 铁匠乡 and Fuchu 辅处乡 townships of Hezhang County, Guizhou (Hsiu 2017b).

Like the Caijia of Puding County, the Caijia of Weining County (or at least Niujaojing) are officially classified as ethnic Gelao. However, the Caijia (locally Caizu) there told me that they do not like that classification at all, and are a completely distinct ethnic group that should be officially recognized. These are all previously unknown locations of Caijia. Bo (2004) did not list any locations of Caijia in Weining County. I have also checked the government gazetteers (*zhi* 志) for Weining County, Hezhang County, Bijie Prefecture, and Guizhou Province, and none of these Caijia locations had been reported in any of these gazetteers.

1.3. Other locations of Caijia

Caijia people are also found further to the southeast in Zhijin and Puding counties, and they are also classified as ethnic Gelao instead of as ethnic Bai as in Hezhang County. On April 1, 2013, a Puding County government official from the local county Ethnic and Religious Bureau told me that there are ethnic Caijia in Xinguo 新国村, Maochang Township 猫场乡, Zhijin County 织金县, but he did not know whether Caijia is still spoken there. However, none of the government officials had any idea where ethnic Caijia are located within Puding County.

According to Zhou (2004), there are also Caijia in Puding County, but they no longer speak the language, and are classified as ethnic Gelao, since their culture and customs were similar to that of the neighboring Gelao. This points to extensive cultural and also linguistic interaction between Caijia and Gelao that had occurred for many centuries.

2. Phonology

Bo (2004) lists 29 consonants for Xingfa Caijia, and notes a 3-way voicing contrast for stop consonants. Niujiuojing Caijia has all of the 29 consonants found in Xingfa Caijia and also 7 additional consonants (bolded and highlighted in yellow below in Table 1) not reported for Xingfa Caijia, which are *l*, *ɮ*, *ʂ*, *ʐ*, *tʂʰ*, *tʂ*, and *dz*. This brings the total number of consonants in Niujiuojing up to 36. As a result, Niujiuojing Caijia is a more phonetically conservative dialect than Xingfa Caijia.

Table 1: Niujiuojing Caijia consonant inventory

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop (aspirated voiceless)	p ^h	t ^h			k ^h	
Stop (unaspirated voiceless)	p	t			k	ʔ
Stop (voiced)	b	d			g	
Nasal	m	n		ɲ	ŋ	
Lateral approximant		l	ɭ			
Lateral fricative		ɮ				
Fricative (voiceless)	f	s	ʂ	ç	x	h
Fricative (voiced)		z	ʐ		ʝ	
Affricate (aspirated voiceless)		ts ^h	tʂʰ	tç ^h		
Affricate (unaspirated voiceless)		ts	tʂ	tç		
Affricate (voiced)		dz	dz			
Approximant				j	w	

In both dialects of Caijia, final the only consonants are *-n* and *-ŋ*. There are no final stop consonants.

Bo (2004) lists the 8 phonetic vowels *a, e, i, ɨ, o, u, u,* and *ə* for Xingfa Caijia, with [ə] occurring only with [əu]. Niujiaojing Caijia has the additional vowels (or rhymes) *ɑ, ɤ,* and *ɹ*. [ɨ] is an allophone of /i/ found after sibilant onsets, and is transcribed as <ɣ> and <ɣ> in Bo (2004).

Bo (2004) lists four tones for Xingfa Caijia, which I have also found in Niujiaojing Caijia.

1. High level [55]
2. Mid level [33]
3. Low falling [31] (transcribed as [21] for Niujiaojing Caijia)
4. Rising [24] (transcribed as [35] for Niujiaojing Caijia)

2.1. Phonetic differences between the Niujiaojing and Xingfa dialects

The following phonetic features of Niujiaojing Caijia have not been reported by Bo (2004) for Xingfa Caijia, and were also not reported in Guizhou (1982, 1984). More data will need to be collected for Niujiaojing Caijia before they can be determined as phonemes.

1. The sibilant retroflex consonants [ʂ], [z], [tʂ], [tʂʰ], and [dz]. These have also not been reported in Longjia and Luren, two Sino-Tibetan languages closely related to Caijia that are documented in Guizhou (1984).
2. The lateral retroflex consonant [ʎ]. Red Gelao of Bigong (also called Zou Lei) also has the lateral retroflex /ʎ/ (Li, et al. 2014), but it is rarely found in other languages of Guizhou.
3. The alveolar lateral fricative consonant [ɬ], which occurs as a syllabic consonant in ɬ²¹ ‘pig.’ Historical, this developed via Niujiaojing ɬ < li < Proto-Caijia *li.
4. The apical vowels [ɹ] and [ɤ]. The apical vowel [ɹ] also occurs in Sanchong Gelao (a Hagei or Green Gelao dialect), which Shen (2003) refers to as a fricativized or apical vowel. has pɹ³⁵ ‘year’. Some nearby Hmongic languages have apical vowels, as in the Miao (West Hmongic) dialect of Pudi Township, Dafang County, Guizhou, which has pɹ³³ ‘five’ (Hsiu 2012 field notes). Historically, the Niujiaojing Caijia apical vowel [ɹ] developed via Niujiaojing -ɹ < -i < Proto-Caijia *-i, while the apical vowel developed via Niujiaojing ɤ < Proto-Caijia *-u.
5. The low back vowel [ɑ], which is likely an allophone of /a/. This is also typical of Gelao lects (Zhang 1993).

6. Tense-lax vowel quality contrast, a feature typical of Loloish languages, including the Eastern Yi (Nasu) dialects of Guizhou and Yunnan (Chen 2010). Tense vowels developed as a result of contact with Loloish languages. Kra-Dai and Hmong-Mien languages in Guizhou do not have tense vowels.
7. Nasalization of vowels. This is also known to occur in Gelao lects (Li 2006), as well as Hmongic languages. Historically, this developed from Niujiaojing $\tilde{V} < \text{Caijia } *-\text{Vn}$.

3. Comparative word list of Niujiaojing Caijia and Xingfa Caijia

This word list compares the Niujiaojing and Xingfa dialects of Caijia. I have only listed items that I have recorded for Niujiaojing Caijia. There are approximately 500 items in Bo's (2004) Caijia word list. 6 items that I have recorded for Niujiaojing Caijia are not covered in Bo (2004), and are listed at the bottom of this word list.

1. **Caijia of Niujiaojing** 牛角井, Yangjie Town, Weining County, Guizhou that I had recorded in 2013. 74 lexical items have been recorded.
2. **Caijia of Xingfa Township** 兴发乡, Hezhang County, Guizhou and the immediately surrounding area documented by Bo Wenzhe (2004). Bo (2004) collected Caijia data from informants from 1. Lijiazhai, Xinying Village, Xingfa Township, Hezhang County (赫章县兴发乡新营村李家寨); and 2. Caijiayuan, Yakou Village, Songlinpo Township, Hezhang County (赫章县松林坡乡垭口村蔡家).

Notes on transcription conventions:

- $\langle \eta \rangle$ is used in Chinese linguistics to represent the allophone of /i/ as it occurs after sibilant onsets.
- $\langle \underline{n} \rangle$ is used in Chinese linguistics as an equivalent of /ŋ/.
- Tense vowels (V) are underlined, following Chinese linguistic transcription conventions.

<i>English gloss</i>	<i>Chinese gloss</i>	<i>Caijia (Niujiaojing)</i>	<i>Caijia (Xingfa)</i>
autonym (Caijia people)	自称	mei ²¹ ni ³³	men ³¹ ni ³³
sky	天	k ^h ẽ ³³	k ^h en ³³
sun	太阳	ji ⁵⁵ soŋ ²¹	en ³³ soŋ ³¹

moon	月亮	ko ⁵⁵ pja ³³ je ³³	ko ⁵⁵ pei ⁵⁵ ja ³³
star	星星	ɕie ⁵⁵ ts ^h ou ²¹	ɕi ⁵⁵ su ³¹
water	水	sɿ ⁵⁵	sɿ ⁵⁵
thunder	雷	tɕɿ ³³	tɿ ³³
wind	风	kua ³⁵ pǣ ³³	pan ³³
mountain	山	tsɿ ²¹	ti ³¹
stone	石头	dza ⁵⁵ tu ²¹	dza ³¹
fire	火	fɛ ⁵⁵	fai ⁵⁵
year	年	ni ²¹	nen ³¹
pig	猪	ɕ ²¹	li ³¹
dog	狗	k ^h ui ⁵⁵	k ^h ui ⁵⁵
rat, mouse	老鼠	ʂu ⁵⁵	su ⁵⁵
bird	鸟	tsɿ ⁵⁵ tsɿ ⁵⁵	tsɿ ³¹ tsɿ ²⁴
snake	蛇	la ²¹ fei ⁵⁵	fei ⁵⁵
mouth	嘴	pz̥ ²¹	pi ³¹
tree	树	mei ²¹ tɕu ²¹	so ⁵⁵
pear	梨	hu ⁵⁵ tɕɿ ³³	hu ³³ tsɿ ³³
head	头	tu ³³ to ⁵⁵	to ³³ to ⁵⁵
hair	头发	pji ⁵⁵	pei ⁵⁵
ear	耳朵	ni ³³ k ^h ǣ ³³	ni ³³ k ^h a ³³
eye	眼睛	ni ³³ dzɿ ³³	ni ³³ dzɿ ³³
nose	鼻子	pz̥ ²¹ kje ³³	bi ³¹ kei ³³
tooth	牙齿	tɕ ^h ɿ ⁵⁵ pi ⁵⁵	ts ^h ei ⁵⁵ pei ⁵⁵
tongue	舌头	dzɿ ³³ ta ²¹	dzɿ ³³ ta ³¹
shoulder	肩膀	ta ³³ pu ²¹	ta ³³ pu ³¹
hand	手	ʂu ⁵⁵	suo ⁵⁵
leg	腿	kɿ ⁵⁵	ku ⁵⁵
blood	血	ts ^h ɿ ⁵⁵ ts ^h ɿ ⁵⁵	ts ^h ɿ ³¹ ts ^h ɿ ³¹
skin	皮肤	pəu ²¹	pəu ³¹
bone	骨头	kui ⁵⁵ tu ²¹	kui ⁵⁵ tuo ³¹
house	房子	ʔuo ⁵⁵	o ⁵⁵

road	路	ho ⁵⁵	ho ⁵⁵
rice	饭	zu ³³	zu ³³
wine	酒	tsu ⁵⁵	tsuo ⁵⁵
to die	死	sɿ ⁵⁵	sɿ ⁵⁵
eat	吃	zu ³³	zu ³¹
drink	喝	aŋ ²¹	aŋ ³¹
sleep	睡	dzɿ ²¹ ŋi ²¹	dzɿ ³³
to kill (person)	杀 (杀人)	sɿ ³³	ɕi ³³
red	红	tɕ ^h ɿ ⁵⁵	ts ^h ɿ ⁵⁵
yellow	黄	ɣoŋ ²¹	ɣuŋ ³¹
white	白	bia ³³	bia ³³
black	黑	k ^h u ⁵⁵	k ^h u ⁵⁵
big	大	la ³³	la ³¹
small	小	ɕi ²¹	ɕie ³¹
back, behind	后	ʔu ⁵⁵ le ³³	ɣuo ³³
thin	薄	bɿ ³³	bu ³³
far	远	tsɿ ⁵⁵	ti ⁵⁵
good	好	k ^h ua ²¹	k ^h ua ³¹
new	新	sɿŋ ³³	ɕin ³³
one	一	ji ²¹ pu ⁵⁵	ji ³³
two	二	ta ⁵⁵ pu ⁵⁵	ta ⁵⁵
three	三	sa ²¹ pu ⁵⁵	sa ³³
four	四	sɿ ²¹ pu ⁵⁵	sɿ ³¹
five	五	ɣuŋ ²¹ pu ⁵⁵	ɣuŋ ³³
six	六	fu ⁵⁵ pu ⁵⁵	fu ⁵⁵
seven	七	ts ^h ɿ ⁵⁵ pu ⁵⁵	tɕ ^h i ⁵⁵
eight	八	pei ⁵⁵ pu ⁵⁵	pei ⁵⁵
nine	九	kuo ⁵⁵ pu ⁵⁵	kuo ⁵⁵
ten	十	dzɿŋ ²¹ pu ⁵⁵	dzɿŋ ³³
this	这	o ²¹ ko ²¹	o ²⁴
that	那	mo ²¹ ko ²¹	mo ²⁴

I	我	ŋu ³³	ŋuo ³³
you (sg.)	你	nu ³³	nu ³³
he, she	他	ŋi ⁵⁵	je ³³
to dream	做梦	tʂɿ ²¹ muŋ ²¹	-
egg	蛋	pja ²¹ k ^h o ⁵⁵	-
to burn	烧	ts ^h ɿ ⁵⁵	-
leaf	叶子	mei ²¹ sei ³³	-
near	近	tɕin ²¹	-
sick	生病	sũ ⁵⁵	-

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