

Dialect Variation within Zhuang Traditional Manuscripts

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Abstract

Rather than being representations of a single graphic community at one particular time or place, Zhuang traditional manuscripts often show signs of internal dialect variation, as well readings derived from different historical strata of Chinese. Readings from different historical strata are discussed at some length in the author's recent Mapping the Old Zhuang Character Script (Brill, 2013) and 'A Layer of Old Chinese Readings in Traditional Zhuang Manuscripts' (BMFEA 2015). In this article, I propose to look specifically at internal dialect variation. By internal dialect variation I mean that the characters or vernacular graphs used to represent the words in the recitation of a text show signs of having come from other localities and other dialects. I demonstrate that this phenomenon is related to the migration of Zhuang populations and social strata, as well as the circulation of texts, and can often be shown to correlate with known historical events which precipitated the movement of peoples. Furthermore, traditional texts provide evidence of hitherto unsuspected population movements, both upstream and downstream and further afield. I use a specific text as an example here: the Hanvueng scripture, for which Professor Meng Yuanyao and I have recently published a critical edition (Hanvueng: The Goose King and the Ancestral King, Brill, 2015). The theoretical implication of this discussion is that the internal analysis of vernacular texts can be used as a tool for reconstructing the history of Zhuang communities.

Keywords: Zhuang; character scripts; vernacular writing systems; dialect; mobility

1. Introduction

In a certain sense, the proper study of sinoxenic scripts is in its infancy. Sinoxenic scripts are character scripts based on the Chinese character script, used to write languages other than Chinese. Outside China, the most well-known and important examples are the Japanese and Korean scripts and Vietnamese Chữ Nôm; these have been the subject of intense scholarly attention for many decades now. For sinoxenic scripts within China itself, the situation has been quite different. Historically, most of the minority peoples of south and southwest China have used the Chinese script, including the Yao, Miao, Zhuang, Bouyei, Gelao, and so on.ⁱ For some of these groups, there has been some attempt by scholars in China to document major texts in character scripts, but for other groups even edited texts are not yet available, let alone systematic studies. Systematic study of the Zhuang script began with the present writer's *Mapping the Old Zhuang Script* (2013), which documented and compared the script used in traditional texts from 45 localities.

Documenting texts in the vernacular language is a first step. But then come the questions requiring more analysis. How old is the script? How do we explain how the characters in the manuscript are read? In the case of any sinoxenic script, these questions often have to do with the way in which the script reflects the sounds of the language. In Chinese itself, around 80% of all graphs in current use are *xiéshēng* 諧聲 characters composed of a graphic element which represents the meaning, and another graphic element which represents the sound of the word. When borrowed to represent the sounds of another language, what kind of reading pronunciation is used as the starting point? For Zhuang, there are any number of possibilities: for the modern period there are Cantonese, Hán-Việt, Guangxi vernacular (Gui-Liu hua 桂柳話, a form of Southwestern Mandarin), Pinghua 平話 (a much older dialect of Chinese), and schoolhouse pronunciation (the pronunciation used in the pre-modern system of village schools).ⁱⁱ There are also historical strata: Early Mandarin, Late Middle Chinese, Early Middle Chinese, Han dynasty Chinese, and Old Chinese. One of the discoveries of the Zhuang script survey was that Guizhou and the northern counties of Guangxi had scripts based for the most part on the pronunciation of Southwest Mandarin, while scripts along the West River system in the middle part of Guangxi were based mainly on Pinghua or on Middle Chinese. In other words, the northern scripts were no more than 500 years old in their present form, while

the scripts in the central part of Guangxi were at least 1700 years old if not older.ⁱⁱⁱ

This is of course the broad-brush picture. When we look at individual manuscripts carefully, we find that the script is often mixed rather than uniform or of uniform age. This sometimes makes analysis rather time-consuming.^{iv} It is not however impossible, given the right methods.

In fact, the sinoxenic scripts within China have been vernacular scripts, rather than official scripts used or established by government authorities. They thus tend to vary from place to place; they are not standardised. It is the nature of this variation that requires investigation. In order to do this systematically, local investigation into the use of documents in the script is needed, along with audio recordings of local dialects and investigations into social structure and local history. Scripts after all are social artefacts, and are developed and maintained as part of the social fabric.

In the case of the Zhuang, we have found that pre-modern rural society has been characterised by a relatively high degree of mobility. I have written about this aspect of Zhuang social history in a series of articles, basing my analysis partly on the insights of Karl Izkowitz and Georges Condominas.^v Mobility in Zhuang society has occurred at the level of the individual, the family, the lineage, the village, and sometimes even at the level of the chiefly domain. That is to say, there are historical instances of Zhuang native chieftains re-locating their courts, bodyguards, retainers and households sometimes hundreds of kilometres away. On the level of individual families, sometimes mobility is related to special occupations, such as blacksmiths and other craftsmen, but also religious practitioners such as Taoists, Ritual Masters, and vernacular priests (*mogong* 麽公).

When Zhuang scribes chose Chinese characters to represent words in the Zhuang language, our default assumption would be, as linguists, that it was the local dialect of Zhuang which they were trying to represent. One could speculate that maybe in some cases there was a prestige dialect, say the speech at the court of a rich and powerful chieftaincy, that could also serve as a possible target language – an emergent regional standard, but we have as yet no direct evidence of this for most localities. However, what we do find quite often is a more mixed picture: most graphs representing broad regional pronunciations, some graphs representing the local dialect pronunciation, and some graphs representing local pronunciations from elsewhere. It is the last category which is of particular interest here.

2. Discovery: the Donglan Manuscript

This last phenomenon was not something that could be predicted by any existing writing systems theory. It first forced itself on my attention when I was working on a manuscript recited for buffalo sacrifice in Donglan 東蘭, a former chieftaincy in the northwest of Guangxi.^{vi}

In the Donglan manuscripts, the character most frequently used for *youq* ‘to stay, be at’ is 係 MSC *xì* ‘connect; connection’. The riddle was that 係 *xì* is a very poor phonetic fit for *youq*, which was locally pronounced *ʔjou*⁵ or *ʔju*⁵. Looking at pre-modern and dialect pronunciations, *xì* 係 is not included in Pulleyblank’s *Lexicon*; a closely related character MSC *xì* 系 ‘to tie up’ is reconstructed as EMC *ɣei*^h, LMC *xɸjiaj*^h, and EM *xì*.^{vii} Karlgren’s GSR gives **kieg/kiei/-hi* for this etymon.^{viii} The Cantonese pronunciation for 係 *xì* is *hei*⁶, which is even less promising. Pinghua pronunciations are *hi*⁵⁵ in Nanning and *hei*⁴² in Binyang.^{ix} However, in certain Bouyei dialects of Guizhou the morpheme *youq* is pronounced as *ʔji*⁵ (Libo county, Weng’an village), *ʔjie*⁵ (Dushan county, Nanzhai village), or *ʔju*⁵ (Libo county, Chaoyang village).^x Any of these pronunciations would be a better fit for 係 *xì* than *ʔjou*⁵ or *ʔju*⁵. In Guangxi Zhuang dialects, the pronunciation *ji*⁵ is found in the northern county of Nandan, *jei*⁵ in Hechi, but *ʔjou*⁵ in Donglan and most other places. At the time, I wrote: “The use of the character 係 *xì* for *youq* is an indication that the Donglan manuscript tradition originated somewhere else, possibly in the Libo-Huanjiang area.”^{xi} As it happened, local investigations revealed that the father-in-law of the current manuscript owner was a religious practitioner (mogong) and an ethnic Maonan, whose family had migrated to Donglan from the Maonan heartland in the western part of Huanjiang. It was his family who brought at least some of the manuscripts from Huanjiang. The oddity in the manuscripts could thus be linked with family-level mobility connected with the exodus of Maonan Ritual Masters from the Huanjiang area in the 19th and early 20th centuries.^{xii}

Subsequent survey information revealed that 係 *xì* was also written for *youq* in Huanjiang and in Du’an county in north-central Guangxi (*Mapping* pp.727, 734).

This is a ‘well-established’ or archetypal case of readings from elsewhere. Having exhaustively explored all the alternatives, the only explanation that was at all plausible was that this particular usage came from elsewhere, and represented not the local pronunciation,

but the local pronunciation in its place of origin. Note, however, that once this usage was embedded in Donglan, 係 *xi* came to be pronounced in the local fashion, as ʔjou⁵. The manuscript nevertheless bore a trace of the migration.

However, I would now wish to modify my earlier statement that ‘the manuscript tradition originated somewhere else’. This statement is too sweeping: while manuscripts clearly are carried from one place to another as a result of various kinds of mobility, along with their owners, the way in which such manuscripts are read by subsequent generations may be influenced by any number of different social and socio-linguistic factors, including local interactions. The unit of transmission may be the whole text, the individual character, or narrative segments. In the case of individual words, the graph from elsewhere may be assimilated to the local pronunciation of the same morpheme, as in the above example, or it may be re-assigned to a locally-current synonym, or in some cases re-interpreted altogether. Frequently, if the word is unknown in the locality, we find that memory of the original pronunciation and meaning is lost, and can only be retrieved by a wider search of other dialect areas.

3. Mixed Character of Zhuang Traditional Manuscripts

The Zhuang script is a vernacular script which varies from locality to locality, but it also soon becomes clear that texts from any one place incorporate readings of various ages. Once incorporated, at least some of these readings became conventionalised: that is, they continued to be pronounced in Zhuang texts conservatively, as they were when they were first borrowed. In central Guangxi, this means some readings correspond most closely to EMC, and others with modern Pinghua. However, in many cases readings correspond equally well with both EMC and modern Pinghua, and thus could date equally well from the time of the Sui-Tang transition (c.600 CE) or from the recent past. This is a span of roughly 1400 years. During this long period, sound changes in the Chinese dialects in Guangxi have run roughly parallel with sound changes in Zhuang. Given these circumstances, the age of the script has had to be investigated not only locality by locality, but also character by character.

But these are difficulties for the researcher. The local people, including the vernacular priests, are simply unaware of these complexities, and transmit the texts as they were handed down to them. The texts of the vernacular priests in any case were not intended for general circulation within village society, but rather had quite restricted circulation among priestly

lineages. To the manner of that transmission we now turn.

4. Performative Literacy

Many of the texts included in our survey are ritual texts performed for household, lineage, or communal rituals. Reciting these scriptures is a central part of such rituals and is indispensable for their ritual efficacy. The actual way in which such ritual texts are recited by the priests is memorised by the apprentices of the master priests (Taoists, ritual masters, and *mogong*) starting from a very young age. Typically, these acolytes will be younger male family members, who are taken along to rituals conducted by their older relatives. The memorisation process is reinforced by listening to the same rituals many times over in the course of even a few years. Acolytes are enjoined to listen carefully to their master's recitations and follow along, adding their voices to his in unison. By the time they are ready for ordination as priests, they will have developed a high degree of familiarity with a range of texts, and be able to recite them from memory. This means that the act of recitation during a ritual is based essentially on an oral transmission, even though the performance may involve turning the pages of the manuscript at the right time. Reciting the text, in other words, is a performative act, and the act of reading does not necessarily involve focussing on the pages of the manuscript, much less reading each character one by one. Many priests, when asked for the pronunciation of particular lines or characters in the middle of a text, are not able to provide it, but have to go back to the beginning of the passage and start from the beginning. This is a very common situation among ritual practitioners in Southwest China.^{xiii}

On the other hand, the written content of the manuscripts is preserved carefully from generation to generation: each generation of apprentice priests is required to copy out carefully by hand all the ritual texts that his master has chosen to give him. The master's own copies of the manuscripts are normally burned along with the master's other personal belongings at the time of his death. In recently copied manuscripts the total number of characters in each section is sometimes written at the end of the section, as a precaution against the possibility of scribal omissions. Copies of manuscripts written by different disciples of the same priest have been found to replicate the graphic composition of characters in the original.^{xiv} The textual and graphic tradition, in other words, is highly conservative.^{xv}

The overall effect of this form of transmission is that the recitation of texts and the transmission (copying) of texts are by and large de-coupled. Knowledge of how the texts are

recited is absorbed orally, through the process of apprentices listening to recitations and replicating them in their own oral performance, while knowledge of the script in which the scriptures are written is effected by transcription (making manuscript copies). These two modes for the transmission of cultural knowledge differ in quality and are also separated in time, recitation beginning quite early in the acolyte's experience – sometimes as early as six years old, and writing at the point of ordination.

On the other hand, Zhuang manuscripts and their recitation show signs of mixing and interaction with the local environment. Mogong and other religious practitioners did not operate in a vacuum, but in competition with other religious practitioners. At the same time as they preserved and protected their textual and liturgical transmission, they were also open to adopting or incorporating new material from a variety of sources: from the ritual songs of female spirit mediums, from the Taoists, Buddhists and Ritual Masters, and from the ceremonial and historical song genres sung at the traditional 'song markets' and in daily life. It was this openness to incorporating new elements that led to the mixed system we see in so many ritual manuscripts.

5. The Hanvueng manuscript and the Tianzhou system

I will briefly characterise here the writing system of the Hanvueng manuscript. Like many other texts from the same region, former Tianzhou 田州 in west-central Guangxi, the script is characterised by a relatively low number of semantic readings and an overall preponderance of phonetic readings. Graphically the area is characterised by a preponderance of orthographic Chinese characters and vernacular variants of them, with relatively few Zhuang invented characters and even fewer complex double-decker characters of the kind found in the southwestern part of Guangxi. Readings for the most part are based on Early Middle Chinese or on Pinghua pronunciation, and within the latter category quite often on pre-modern Pinghua. Tianzhou was the seat of a rich and powerful chieftaincy with its court at present-day Tianyang 田陽 (Zh. gyang Nganx), ruled since the beginning of the Ming by the Cen 岑 chiefly lineage. Our text comes from a satellite chieftaincy in the northern reaches of Tianzhou proper.

6. Local Pronunciations

A recitation of the text by a local dialect speaker was the basis for the IPA transcription that appears in the annotated edition.^{xvi} While not himself an ordained mogong or the traditional owner of the manuscript, Huang Ziyi 黄子仪 came from the same sub-dialect (lect) area in the borderland of present-day Bama, Tianyang and Tiandong counties, and was familiar with the local religious language. The description of the sound system of the local lect in the annotated edition (pp.34–47) is based directly on his pronunciation. From this description, it becomes clear that the lect is a variant of the Youjiang River dialect, spoken in the counties of Bose, Tianyang and Tiandong, along the Youjiang 右江 ('Right River'). This dialect has a number of distinguishing features. The most useful diagnostically for us is that initials that appear elsewhere as palatalised initial clusters /pj-/ and /kj-/ (or as /pl-/ and /kl-/) are realised in this dialect as alveolar affricates /tɕ-/. Thus for example the word for 'fish' (standard Zhuang *bya*) is pronounced tɕa¹, and the word for 'middle' – standard Zhuang *gyang* (kja:ŋ¹) – is pronounced tɕa:ŋ¹. If a character has been chosen locally for one of these initials, and on the basis of local pronunciation, the result is usually a character which is read with initial /tɕ-/. We have room for one example:

Line 185:

倍解途黎礼久墓。

Baez byaij doh-lawz ndaej gyaeuj mou

"If I go just once how can I get the pig's head?"

The second character in this line is 解, a vernacular character equivalent to 解, MSC *jiě* 'to untie, release'. The B edition transcribes this word as *byaij* and glosses it as 'walk' (B623:2). 解 is EMC *kaij*'/ke:j', LMC *kja:j*', EM *kja:j*' (Pb 155), while PH readings include *kai*³³ in Tiandong and Nanning, and *tsai*³³ in Binyang (Li 67); SWM readings are *kæ*⁵⁴ in Guilin and Liuzhou (*Hanyu fangyan zhi* 653). St.Zh. *byaij* corresponds to tɕa:i□ in the Youjiang dialect, and tɕa:i□ is a close phonetic match with the Binyang Pinghua pronunciation of 解.

7. Readings from Pinghua and Southwestern Mandarin

Readings from Pinghua are very common in this text. Pinghua is a Han Chinese dialect with a very long history in the Guangxi region, with roots that probably date back to the Han period. Pinghua readings in our text are mostly in close correspondence with local Pinghua, but occasionally one finds Pinghua readings from elsewhere. Particularly noteworthy are readings based on the Pinghua dialect of Binyang 賓陽, a county to the east of Nanning. In the late traditional period (1644–present) craftsmen and petty merchants from Binyang were particularly active throughout the Zhuang-speaking western parts of Guangxi, including the Tianyang area. Readings based on Southwestern Mandarin, much less common in the present text, may also represent readings from elsewhere. In the interests of space I will not discuss examples here.

8. Readings from the Bouyei and the North

There are quite a number of readings in our text which point to northern connections. In some cases the tell-tale sign is in word usage or grammar, but in most cases it is pronunciation of individual lexical items. By Bouyei here I mean Guizhou Bouyei, and by the North I mean the northern counties of Guangxi, just south of the Guizhou border. There is a linguistic continuum across this entire area and sometimes it is not possible to tell whether a reading comes from Guizhou Bouyei or from the northern counties of Guangxi. The autonym (self-designation) used by the Zhuang people in these northern counties is mostly Bouxyaex (pu⁴ ʔjai⁴) in any case, and there are cultural as well as linguistic continuities across the Guangxi-Guizhou border. I will discuss a few examples from the north first, then pass on to examples from Guizhou Bouyei itself.^{xvii}

Line 122:

𠵿黎里娟有。

Baih-lawz miz sau ndwi

Where is there a girl not married?

The third character in the manuscript line is 里 MSC *li* ‘borough’, which the B edition

reads as *miz* 'to have' (B610:4). Judging by the script, the character 里 *li* ought to be read as *lix* (*li:l̥*), meaning 'to have still; remain; still'. This word is pronounced as *lij* with 3rd tone in most dialects, but is consistently pronounced as *lix* in 4th tone in the local lect. Pre-modern readings of 里 *li* include EMC *li'/li'* and LMC *li'* (Pb 188). However, Huang Ziyi in his recitation follows the B edition and recites this character as *mi:ɿ̌* (*miz*), i.e. as the usual word for 'to have' in Zhuang. This is an instance of synonym substitution. *Lij* (or *lix*) is commonly found in Bouyei and in northern Zhuang dialects instead of *miz* 'to have; exist'.

Line 256:

面隆鲁斗劳。

Mienh roengz rox daeuj liuh.

With no tension in my face, I know how to come visiting.

The last character in this line is 劳, an old simplified variant of 勞 MSC *láo* 'to work hard, go to trouble', which the B edition reads as *liuh* (*liu⁶*) and glosses as 玩 'enjoy oneself'. 勞 *láo* 'toil' has pre-modern readings EMC and LMC *law*, and PH readings such as *lau⁴¹* in Tiandong and *lau²¹* in Nanning (Li p.126). The question here is whether or not 劳 represents a local pronunciation something like *lauh*, rather than *liuh* as in Standard Zhuang. Such a pronunciation is attested in the ZHCH, along with *lah* (461); unfortunately, ZHCH does not indicate where these dialect pronunciations come from. The character 劳 and others with the same phonophore, e.g. 捞, are typically read as *lau* (with long *a*) in some tone in Zhuang (see Snd 278–279 for examples). In the Hanvueng text, rhyming patterns often clearly indicate to a pronunciation *lauh* in cases where this morpheme is written with 劳: at line 498, this word rhymes with *cauh* 'to row' at the end of line 497; at line 655, there is a possible rhyme with *hauq* 'to speak' in the middle of line 654; and at line 1019, this word rhymes with *daug* 'return' at the end of line 1018. None of these other morphemes varies between *-iu^B* and *-au^B* rimes, at least as far as has been attested. In all these cases, the B edition standardises the pronunciation to *liuh*. However, informants report that there is no such pronunciation as *lauh* for this morpheme ('enjoy oneself') in this area. If so, it is possible that this graphic rendering for *liuh*, and at least portions of the manuscript, may have been imported from another locality which does have *lauh*. ZhYFYJ includes an item 玩耍 'to have fun' (p.725 item 888), for which pronunciations of *liuh* are listed for a few localities: these are Fusui, Ningming, Chongzuo and Longzhou, all survey points in the southwest. These all have *liu⁶*; at least these southern localities can be ruled out as a source of *lauh*. Towards the north, however, a reading

equivalent to *lauh* is found in Guizhou Bouyei, transcribed as *laauh* (laru⁶) and found in Niuchang in Zhenfeng (BCETD pp.366–367) and in Wangmo (BHCD p.297). This item is not included in the Bouyei language survey, so its wider distribution in Guizhou and northern Guangxi has yet to be investigated, but at least one can say that the *lauh* reading is likely to have northern connections.

Line 355:

奴幼怒畱除。

Noh youq nok duz-cwz

The flesh of the ox is found at the hump.

The third character in this line is 怒 *nù* ‘anger’, which the B edition reads as *nok* and glosses as 峰 ‘peak’ (B657:2). 怒 *nù* has pre-modern readings EMC nɔ^h and LMC nuǎ^h (Pb 228), while PH readings include nɔ²² in Tiandong and nu²²³ in Nanning (Li 29); there is no dialect reading that has a final -k. In Chinese, 怒 *nù* is not a *rusheng* 入聲 syllable. On the Tai side, it is possible that this reading comes from an area where the final -k in *nok* is elided. In Bouyei such areas include the border between Guizhou and Guangxi along the Nanpanjiang 南盤江 river and as far east as Libo; southwestern Guizhou including the Beipanjiang 北盤江 river area; and west-central Guizhou (BYYDChBG 268 item 0558). This word is not included in the Zhuang dialect surveys, but in Guangxi elision of stop finals (-p -t and -k) before a long vowel is found in Nandan and sporadically in other northern areas.

9. Readings from Bouyei

There are altogether 13 instances of readings which come from Bouyei.^{xviii} The Bouyei-speaking areas of Guizhou are upstream from the central-western part of Guangxi, and are connected by rivers which were seasonably navigable. Even so, this number is striking. The first two examples here are of differences in the common meaning of words, or of words used grammatically.

Line 116:

初王耗唔你。

Caj vuengz hauq coenz neix

“If the king spoke words like this,”

This line begins with a word *caj*, glossed as ‘if’. A word *caj* meaning ‘if’ is not found in ZHCH, the standard Zhuang-Chinese dictionary, though ZHCH does list a disyllabic compound *caqciuh* meaning ‘if’ in which the first syllable differs from *caj* only in tone (ZHCH 88). A word *xax* (ɕa³¹) or *xaxnauz* (ɕa³¹nau¹¹) is found in Bouyei texts, meaning ‘if’ (*Weanljees Buxqyaix* p.715; *Haansweangz* pp.156–7). The same word, pronounced ɕa⁵⁵, meaning ‘if’ (where 55 is tone 3), is found in the Nong dialect of Xichou 西畴 in eastern Yunnan (*Yunnan shengzhi: Shaoshu minzu yuyan wenzi zhi*, 167). In Zhuang, the usual meaning of *caj* is ‘to wait’; another meaning is 假使 ‘suppose, supposing’. Usages found in this text such as ‘if’ and ‘since’ may have been derived locally by a process of grammaticalisation from ‘supposing’ and ‘wait’ respectively, but it is more likely that they have been imported from Bouyei areas.

Line 123:

娄同散介王。

Raeuz doengz suenq gaiq vuengz

Let us plan together for the king.

(B610:5) The fourth character in this line is 介, MSC *jiè* ‘to lie between’, read as *gaiq* and glossed as 给 ‘give’. This would seem to be a context-dependent gloss. In fact, this morpheme is the same as the indefinite classifier *gaiq*. In Zhuang, the phrase *gaiq vuengz* would normally be understood as equivalent to *saeh gaiq vuengz* ‘the affairs belonging to the king’. Evidently in Standard Zhuang *gaiq* is not regarded as a dative indicator. In ritual verse, however, such usages appear quite commonly, and *gaiq* is often found as a quasi-dative, indicating the recipient or beneficiary of an action. On this usage see Holm, *Recalling Lost Souls*, p.120, note to Text 3 line 83. *Gaiq* is used in a similar fashion in Bouyei *mogong* texts from Guizhou: see *Weanljees Buxqyaix* p.287 (where there is a note on this usage, commenting on a text from Zhenfeng County in southwestern Guizhou).

Line 316:

闻汜作酒壬。

Hai laeuj-yag laeuj-yaem

They opened the fresh wine and the distilled wine.

The third character in this line is 作 MSC *zuò* ‘to do’, which the B edition (B649:3) reads as *yah* and glosses as 滴 ‘drop (of water)’. This reading does not fit the manuscript.

Pre-modern and dialect readings of 作 *zuò* are twofold: for the meaning ‘make, act as, be’, EMC *tsoʰ*, LMC *tsuoʰ*, and for the meaning ‘arise; create’, EMC and LMC *tsak* (Pb 425), while PH readings include *tsak*³³ in Tiandong and *tɕak*³³ in Nanning (Li 286). As it turns out, it is the latter set of readings that is relevant here. There are two different words for ‘drop of liquid’ in Zhuang: *caek* (*ɕɛk*⁷) for smaller drops and *yag* (or *yah*) for larger drops. What has happened here is that 作 *zuò* has been written to represent *caek* ‘small drop’, and then *yah* ‘large drop’ has been substituted through synonym substitution.

More particularly, the word *yag* means a ‘round drop of water as it falls down’. Thus *yag vax* means ‘drops of water dripping from the eaves’, *yag saeg* is ‘water dripping from clothes that have just been washed’. In the process of distilling wine or rice beer, cold water is used to condense the steam, and make it turn into wine in a liquid form which will drip down and flow out of the steaming utensil. Thus *laeujiyag* is liquor which has just been condensed in this fashion and has dripped down.

Incidentally, most dialect locations in Guangxi have final -k for this word *yag* (ZhYFYJ p.703, item 737), whereas *yah* (with elision of the final consonant) is found in Bouyei: see BYHCD 648 (*yah*, *ja*³³), and BYHTD 732 (*yah*, *ja*⁶), representing Wangmo and Zhenfeng Niuchang respectively. Thus the reading *yah* in the B edition may actually represent a northern, Bouyei pronunciation.

Line 405:

含罌唐時入。

Haemh gangj daemq six-saeb

In the evening he spoke in a low voice murmuring.

The last character in this line is 入 MSC *rù* ‘to enter’, which the B edition (667:2) reads as -*saeb* and glosses together with the previous character (*six*-) as 喃咕 ‘to mutter’. The challenge is to explain the initial s- (t-). Pre-modern Chinese pronunciations include EMC *nip*, LMC *rip*, and EM *ri*⁷, *ry*⁷ (Pb 269). PH readings include *nɛp*³³ in Tiandong and (j)*iep*²² in Nanning (Li 197). None of these readings is helpful. It may be pertinent to note, however, that in Bouyei syllables with initial r- are very widely pronounced as z-. It is possible that some such reading, based on EM or SWM, was de-voiced, giving initial s-. The word *saeb* is well-attested elsewhere, with the meaning 迎接 ‘to receive in welcome’ (ZHCH 660), itself a causative based on a root meaning of ‘to enter’. *Saeb* is also used in the senses 塞入 ‘to plug in’, 嵌入 ‘to wedge in’, and 套進 ‘to fit in’.

Line 720:

廉憑得皮大。

Liemz-fwngz dwk beix-daih

He raised his hand to strike his elder brother.

The first character in this line is 廉 *lián* ‘incorruptible’, which the B edition reads as *lip* and glosses as 動 ‘move’, forming a phrase with the next character, read as *fwngz* ‘hand’, meaning 動手 ‘raise the hand’ (B730:2). The reading is peculiar. First, there is no such syllable as *lip* listed in the ZHCH. Huang Ziyi’s recited pronunciation is *liemzfwngz*. For *liemzfwngz*, however, ZHCH 467 gives only the meaning 茅鏟刀 ‘sickle for clearing cogongrass’, where *liemz* is the word for ‘sickle’. 廉 *lián* has pre-modern readings EMC and LMC *liam* (Pb 191), while PH readings include *lim*⁴¹ in Tiandong and *lim*²¹ in Nanning (Li 183). A homophone of *liemz* in Bouyei is *liamz*, which means 悄悄 ‘stealthily’ (BYHCD). The meaning ‘stealthily’ is a good fit for the context. This morpheme is currently unattested for Zhuang (ZHCH 467), but could have been imported from the north. The priests in Bama who provided the original reading for the B edition did not recognise this word, hence the reading *lip*.

Line 744:

慈列明皮大。

Saek-leq mwngz beix-daih

“Fortunately for you, elder brother.”

The second character in this line is 列 *liè* ‘series’, which the B edition reads as *leq* and glosses as 是 ‘is, was’ (B735:1). The first character, a vernacular variant of 慈 *cí* ‘loving kindness’, is read as *swz* and glossed as 哪 (知) ‘how (was I to know)?’. Taken together, the meaning of the two characters would be, ‘How could I know that it was ... ?’ This is problematic. It is possible to read *swz* as ‘which? who?’ (Snd 475, though this usage is evidently a southern Zhuang usage, and may be confined to the phrase *kon²sur²* ‘who?’), but then *leq* is left unidentified; *leq* ‘is, was’ is otherwise unattested. One possibility would be to read 列 *liè* as *le*, the particle for marking the sentence topic (as also in lines 600, 987, 988, 989). If 列 *liè* is read as *ndeq* ‘not know’, as in line 659 above, the meaning would be something like ‘How could I not know?’ This at least follows the gloss in the B edition rather closely, and makes reasonable sense. As it happens, line 729 above is a very similar line, and

stands in a similar relation to its context, but has *mbouj rox* ‘not know’ as the first two words in place of *swzleq*.

Huang Ziyi, following the B edition with its standardised characters, reads the first two characters as *saekleq*. This would seem to be a misreading, based on the standardised character for *swz*, which is 色 *sè* with a person radical (Snd 475). This would naturally be read as *saek*. Meng Yuanyao notes that *saeklex* is a Tianyang dialect equivalent of St.Zh. *saeklaiq* ‘fortunately’. The meaning would be something like, “Fortunately brother [you’re very capable, otherwise I might have hurt you].” The problem is that 慈 *cí* is not a *rusheng* syllable ending with a -k, and has EMC and LMC readings *dzi/dzi* and *tsfɿz* (Pb 63), and PH readings including *tsi*⁴¹ in Tiandong (Li 103), so *saek* with final -k is an unlikely reading.

The solution is that the two characters do mean ‘fortunately’, but in a way not recognised either by the editors of the B edition or the priests in Bama. The Bouyei equivalent of *saeklaiq* is *xiezlaais* (ɕiə¹¹ lai³⁵) (BYHCD 626). The Bouyei pronunciation in this dictionary comes from Wangmo County, upstream along the Hongshuijiang River from the eastern part of Bama, but we expect that Bouyei pronunciation of other counties in southern Guizhou would be similar, at least in the same dialect area. The first syllable has elided final -k before a long vowel, as is common in Bouyei. The explanation in the B edition, and the paraphrase *mbouj rox* ‘not know’ on line 729, were generated in the Bama locality once this word was no longer recognised locally.

Lines 881–2:

他慈髻獨汙。

他慈宋獨令。

De sik noh ma mwn

De sik naeng ma riengq

“They’ll shred their flesh and stew it,

They’ll shred their skin and roast it.”

The second character in both of these lines is a vernacular variant of 慈 MSC *cí* ‘loving kindness’, which the B edition reads as *sik* and glosses as 撕 ‘rip, tear’ (B762:3–4). This reading seems plausible in context, but as mentioned above, 慈 *cí* is not a *rusheng* character. For that matter, 撕 MSC *sī* is not a *rusheng* character, either; it has pre-modern readings EMC *siǎ/si* and LMC *sɿ* (Pb 291), and PH readings *ɬɿ*⁵⁴ in Tiandong and *ɬi*⁴¹ in Nanning (Li 90). So Zh. *sik* is not a borrowing from Ch. 撕 *sī*. Neither Li Fang Kuei in HCT nor Liang and Zhang include this word for ‘rip’ in their reconstructions, nor is it listed in the ZhYFYJ,

though a number of dialect words are listed in ZHCH 684: *cek*, *leg*, *mbek*, *ciek*. All of these have final -k. 慈 *cí* and 撕 *sī* are approximate homophones, at least in PH and in SWM, so it may be that 慈 *cí* was written in place of 撕 *sī*, with 撕 *sī* 'rip' representing *sik* 'rip' semantically. Another possibility is that this use of 慈 *cí* for *sik* originated in Bouyei areas, where the final -k would have been elided. However, Wangmo Bouyei has *sigt* (*sik*³⁵) for this lexeme (BYHCD 546), so this instance is doubtful.

Line 928:

□ 律 台 劫 途。

Guh raet dai lwg-dog

"I'll make measles and your only son will die."

The last character in this line is 途 MSC *tú* 'road', which the B edition reads as *dog* and glosses as 獨 'alone' (B771:5). This reading is suspect on phonetic grounds. The pre-modern readings of 途 *tú* are EMC *do* and LMC *tfluš* (Pb 312), while PH readings are *to*⁴¹ for Tiandong and *tu*²¹ for Nanning (Li 28). None of these readings has a final -k. In Bouyei, however, the final -k is elided on this word: thus *legdoh* (*luk*³³ *to*³³) 'only child' (*Weanljees Buxqyaix* 950). It may well be that this particular reading comes either from Bouyei or from Zhuang areas where -k is elided. Even so, this syllable is clearly meant to rhyme with the second syllable in the next line, *dok*, so on these grounds it is not unlikely that *dog* represents the way the text was recited in Bama.

10. Readings from the South

There are a smaller number of readings which point incontrovertibly to southern readings.^{xix} Others are ambiguous, and could have come either from the south or the north. I will discuss the southern readings first. By southern readings I mean readings from the Southern Zhuang dialects found in the counties to the south of the Youjiang River, in southwestern Guangxi. These dialects are phonologically distinct from the northern dialects and have been classified by Li Fang Kuei and other linguists as Central Tai (CT) languages along with Tày and Nùng languages in Vietnam.

Line 145:

肉 鴻 迫 隆 賤。

Noh roeg-fek roengz cien

Put the meat of some partridges down in the pan to fry.

The third character in this line is 迫 MSC *pò* 'to coerce', which the B edition reads as *fek*, as part of a compound *roegfek*, glossed as 鷓鴣 'partridge' (B615:2). 迫 is clearly being read phonetically here, there is no reason to doubt the interpretation, and the problem is to explain how 迫 could be pronounced as *fek*. EMC and LMC readings of this character are *paijk/peijk* and *paijk* (Pb 241), and local Pinghua readings are *p'ek*³³ (Tiandong and Mashan, in Li p.327 item 3264). The final *-ek* corresponds well with both local Pinghua and reconstructed EMC *peijk*; the remaining problem is initial *f-*. There is no PH dialect that has initial *f-* for this character; all locations surveyed have either initial *p'-* or initial *p-*. It may be significant that Snd lists a vernacular character for *fek* 'partridge' which is a combination of 八 MSC *bā* 'eight' and the bird radical 鳥 (Snd 157). The word for 'eight' in Zhuang is *bed* (*peit*), and the local Pinghua pronunciation of 八 is *pat*³³ (Li p.207 item 2070). Snd lists this character for *fek* without indicating its place of origin. Fortunately the ZhYFYJ lists dialect variants of the word for 'partridge' (p.616, item 145). Among Northern Zhuang dialects most of the northwestern locations have initial *f-* (Wuming, Hengxian, Yongning north, Pingguo, Tiandong), Liujiang has *θw-*, Yishan has *ʔ-*, a range of central-north, central and northeastern locations have *w-* (Huanjiang, Rong'an, Hechi, Donglan, Du'an, Shanglin, Laibin, Guigang, Lianshan), and Longsheng has *jw-*; Southern Zhuang dialects mostly have *p^h-* (Qinzhou, Yongning south, Long'an, Fusui, Shangsi, Chongzuo, Ningming), while a few have *f-* (Longzhou, Daxin) and *θ-* (Debao, Jingxi). One possibility, therefore, is that this way of writing *fek* originated in a Southern Zhuang dialect area where this word is pronounced with an initial *p^h-*.

A final consideration is that in Hán-Việt the process of dentilabialisation has gone further than in PH and other Chinese dialects, including Cantonese. Many words with the 滂 *pāng* initial in MC show initial *f-* (*ph-* in Quốc ngữ) in Vietnamese: thus for example 配 *pèi* 'accompany' = *phối* (*foi*³⁵), 破 *pò* 'break open' = *phá* (*fá*³⁵), and 坡 *pō* 'slope' = *pha* (*fá*⁴⁴). However, there are also a number of words with the 幫 *bāng* initial in MC which have also undergone dentilabialisation: thus 簸 *bō* 'winnowing fan; to winnow' = *pha* (*fá*⁴⁴), and 跛 *bǒ* 'lame' = *phả* (*fá*²¹⁵). 迫 *pò* also has initial 幫 *bāng*, but is pronounced *bách* (*béc*³⁵) in HV, so at least we can say that the reading here is not a direct borrowing from HV.

Line 1073:

曜造米巴索。

Yiuh caux mih bax-sieg

The eagle then was mightily pleased.

The last character in this line is a vernacular variant of 索 MSC *suǒ* ‘twist a rope’, which the B edition reads along with the previous character as (*bax*) *sieg* and glosses as an intensifying suffix after *mih* ‘pleased’ (B800:5). 索 *suǒ* has pre-modern readings EMC *sak* and LMC *sak* (Pb 298). 索 is also read as *sè* ‘select’, which has pre-modern readings EMC and LMC *ɬəijk*. For the latter, the *Guangyun* 廣韻 5:35a (23559) gives the classification 梗開二入麥山, a category not represented in Li Lianjin’s work on PH. For 索 *suǒ*, PH readings include *ɬak*³³ in Tiandong and Nanning and *ɬək*³³ in Binyang (Li 287). This word is related to the word for ‘rope’ in the Tai languages, Zh. *cak* (ɕak⁷). The diphthongised long -i:- here is anomalous. NT dialects almost invariably have long -a:- for *cak* (ɕak⁷) ‘rope’, but CT dialects have -i:-, -əi:-, -y:- and so on (ZhYFYYJ 674 item 540). Thus Ningming has *tsi:k*⁸ and *tsu:k*⁸, Daxin has *su:k*¹⁰, and Debao and Jingxi have *tsy:k*¹⁰. Siamese has *čiak* D2L (HCT 282). Li reconstructs a PT vowel *-ia-. So reading *sieg* here is not implausible, but it points to a southern connection.

11. Either North or South

I list here two examples of readings that could have come either from Guizhou Bouyei or the north of Guangxi, or from the southern CT dialects. Evidence does not allow us to disambiguate these cases, which in any case are isolated readings.

Line 190:

双吞戍咳綉。

Song *din* swt haiz-siu

On her two feet she put on her embroidered shoes.

The second character in this line is 吞 *tūn* ‘swallow’, which the B edition reads as *din* and glosses as 腳 ‘foot’ (B624:2). The reading is not in doubt, but needs to be explained. 吞 *tūn* seems less than ideal as a representation of *din*, and elsewhere is used to represent the common classifier *aen* (*ndaen*) and other words with a short simplex /ɐ/ vowel (e.g. *daenh*, *daenj*, and *daenz*, see Snd 100–101). In a number of localities, however, *din* ‘foot’ has the pronunciation *tən*¹, with a short centralised vowel (e.g. Qiubei, Yongning South and Jingxi: see ZhYFYYJ 645 item 343; cf. HCT 101 for CT dialects). Li Fang Kuei reconstructs PT **tiən* A1

(HCT 263) for ‘foot’; Liang Min and Zhang Junru likewise reconstruct PKT *t̪iən (*Gailun* 726). Either this particular usage has been borrowed from an area in which the pronunciation t̪ən¹ is current, or else it bears the trace of historic sound change, since all documented NT locations except Qiubei and west-central Guizhou Bouyei now have the pronunciation t̪in¹. In the counties to the south, where CT dialects are spoken, t̪ən¹ is found in Shangsi and t̪ən¹ in Jingxi. In west-central Guizhou the reading t̪ən¹ is characteristic of the entire 3rd dialect area as far east as Ziyun county (*Buyiyu diaocha baogao* p.254 item 455), including the Beipanjiang river area upstream of the Hongshuijiang 紅水江 in Guangxi. Either this is a usage with southern connections, or it has come from Guizhou Bouyei.

Line 274:

淋得列貧侁。

Raemx dwk lwt baenz mbaengq

“Water poured from a small container becomes water in a big container.”

The last character in this line is 侁 MSC *shěn* ‘large crowd’, read here as *mbaengq* ‘large bamboo container’. In other texts, this character is read as *fangz* ‘ghost; ancestral spirit’ (Snd 154), *senz* ‘satisfied’ (Snd 456), and *faengz* ‘river bank’. This character comes to be read here as *mbaengq* as a result of secondary borrowing, based on *fangz* ‘ghost’. The reading *fangz* itself comes via a ‘combined meanings’ (*huiyi* 會意) re-interpretation of the original graph, with the meaning ‘human being’ (亼) combined with that of ‘previous’ (先). A dialect pronunciation of *fangz* is *mangz*, and the reading *mbaengq* would have been borrowed phonetically from this latter pronunciation. However, since the pronunciation *mangz* for ‘ghost’ is not found in the immediate Bama-Tianyang locality, where the pronunciation *fangz* is current, this usage may have been imported from elsewhere. *Fangz* ‘ghost’ is pronounced as *mangz* in Long’an, Yongning, Shangsi, Chongzuo and Fusui in the central south of Guangxi, Huanjiang in northern Guangxi, and Libo and Sandu in south-central Guizhou (ZhYFYJ 687, BYYDCBG 134).

12. Historical Background

What set of historical circumstances gave rise to the presence of northern and southern layers in our text? To take first the north: here we can point to continuous and ongoing mobility of village communities along the major river systems linking the Guizhou highlands

with the central western part of Guangxi: the Beipanjiang, the Nanpanjiang, and the Hongshui River, all of which provided a seasonally navigable water transport link between areas as far north as present-day Zhenning 鎮寧 and Anshun 安順 counties in central-western Guizhou and west-central Guangxi, including the Cen 岑 lineage chieftaincies of Sicheng 泗城 and Si'en 思恩.^{xx}

Not only was there a readily available and well-travelled river transport route, but also political integration of a sort. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the domains of the Cen lords extended as far north as Zhenning in west-central Guizhou. This may be a factor that explains the presence of troops from Guizhou in the Tianzhou area during the internecine strife that broke out between Si'en and Tianzhou in the early decades of the Ming dynasty.^{xxi} The Ming history does not mention the size of the contingent of troops from Guizhou, nor does it say how long the Guizhou contingent remained in the Tianzhou area. For that matter, an occupation force from the heartland of Sicheng zhou, located in present-day Leye in northwestern Guangxi, could also have served as the source of northern readings in the manuscript. The Cen chieftains had allied themselves closely with the Ming court from the very beginning of the dynasty, and at least in some of their domains promoted the new official language in the schools that they founded. This new official language was the forerunner of present-day Southwestern Mandarin. With this official sponsorship would have come new SWM readings in native-language texts.

The southern connections are on two levels. First, there was the level of the common soldiers. Zhuang chieftaincies were highly militarised and every adult male owed military service to his lord. Some campaigns took native troops to neighbouring chieftaincies, while others took them further afield: to Hainan, to the Jiangnan area, and to Annam. The Ming occupation of Vietnam in the period 1406–1427 resulted in large numbers of Chinese troops in Vietnam. Because of troop losses among the Ming imperial armies due to tropical fevers, many of the troops in the occupying force and transport contingents were native troops drawn from southern chieftaincies like Sizhou 思州 and Taiping 太平, but they also came from Tianzhou.^{xxii} In the other direction, during the wars between the Tianzhou and Si'en chieftaincies in the late 15th century, the Ming history records that some 200,000 troops from Jiaozhi were 'borrowed' by the warring parties and took part in the fighting in the Tianzhou area.^{xxiii} These troops were possibly native Tày-speaking troops from the northern mountain valleys, rather than imperial armies despatched by the Annamese court.

The lyrics of soldiers' Campaign Songs (*Fwencaeg*) sung in Tiandong 田東 and Pingguo

平果 counties, composed during or after the Tianzhou-Si'en disturbances,^{xxiv} also testify to the appearance locally of troops from Jiaozhi during this period. The lyrics of these songs mention that these contingents included marauding soldiers from Dazboeg (Dabo 達剌), which, according to the song-masters in Pingguo, was a small principality in Jiaozhi.^{xxv}

Secondly, there was a connection via the Cen chiefly clan. The Cen chieftains make their first appearance in Chinese historical sources in the Northern Song dynasty as a notable native family in Kangzhou 康州, and then around a century later as the lords of Qiyuan zhou 七源州 in the north of present-day Lạng Sơn province in northern Vietnam.^{xxvi} Around 1080, Cen Qingbin 岑慶賓, lord of Qiyuan zhou, moved with his clan and retainers to a location in the northwestern part of present-day Guangxi, where he apparently established a northern Qiyuan zhou. He is said to have moved northwards out of the border region in order to avoid being assassinated. During this period, the Vietnamese court reportedly pursued a policy of killing any chieftains in the border areas who declared their loyalty to the Song.^{xxvii} The Song court, meanwhile, sought to avoid conflicts along the southern border of the empire, and so did not intervene or come to the assistance of local chieftains.^{xxviii} The northern Cen later went on to become immensely powerful as the lords of Sicheng zhou and Tianzhou, but they retained their links with the original Qiyuan zhou in the south, moving personnel from one chieftaincy to another in response to changing circumstances. In other words, there was two-way movement, and the maintenance of a north-south connection linking northwestern Guangxi with domains in northern Vietnam.

These circumstances indicate that connections between the Tianzhou area and regions to the south were of long-standing and had deep historical roots, quite sufficient to explain the presence of southern readings in our manuscript. These connections were not just at the level of the common soldier, but also at the highest political level, in constellations of regional chiefly domains. The latter included also the religious practitioners called mogong, who were directly attached to the chiefly courts and were responsible for the most important triennial sacrifices to the guardian spirits of the domain.^{xxix}

13. Wider Implications

This manuscript can be read as a palimpsest – that is, as a document that contains traces of past historical and geographical connections of its host community. The fact that literacy has been present among the non-Han Chinese peoples of the area for at least 1700 years, if not

considerably longer, makes this particularly significant. Some of these connections are kept alive in local memory, through the singing of traditional songs, but the memory of other things naturally fades with the passage of time, so that many details about the migrations of peoples in history are lost to local memory. This means, of course, that they can no longer be recovered by ethnographic fieldwork. But where local communities retain limited memories of their past history, the manuscript 'remembers'. An analogy with human DNA typology is not entirely out of place: just as each mutation in mitochondrial or Y-chromosome DNA leaves permanent and indelible traces, necessarily shared by all subsequent generations, so such manuscripts leave indelible traces of the historical interactions of their host communities during each period. Such traces are indelible partly because, thanks to the mechanism of performative literacy, they go un-noticed.

Over the last five hundred years or so, the migration of minority peoples across the China-Vietnam border has been a major factor in the ethnohistory of the region and in explaining the present distribution of ethnic groups. Linguists investigating communities on both sides of this border have documented the existence of a 'Language Corridor', migration routes going from present-day Guizhou down through the eastern part of Yunnan, down into the north and northwestern parts of Vietnam, and thence further afield into Laos and Thailand.^{xxx} A key trigger for these migrations was the disbandment of local chieftaincies and the establishment of direct rule by the Chinese court beginning in the early Ming, followed by an influx of Han Chinese settlers and inter-ethnic conflicts. By comparing the tone patterns, tone categories, initials, finals and other characteristics of local spoken languages, linguists have been able in some cases to pinpoint the localities of origin of communities now in the border area.

The present paper suggests that for the Zhuang and other Tay peoples in Guangxi, such movement was not uni-directional but went in both directions. Nor was it confined to refugee families, fleeing pogroms or famine. Nor for that matter was it confined to single historical junctures, but rather was part and parcel of a shuttle-like mobility upstream and downstream and from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, at all levels of society.

The present paper also suggests an entirely different theoretical perspective, and a wide prospect for future research. Rather than confining themselves like linguists to the analysis of spoken languages, ethnographers, philologists, and linguistic anthropologists can also make use of the additional resources hidden under the surface of traditional vernacular texts. Unlike texts in standard scripts like Chinese, these texts are exceptionally rich in information that is

not retrievable by other means. In the future, the use of methods of the kind illustrated here promises very substantial breakthroughs in the ethnohistory of the region. There is much work to be done by a younger generation of scholars.

NOTES

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- ⁱ For a useful overview, see Lu Xixing 陸錫興, *Hanzi chuanbo shi* 漢字傳播史 (2002).
- ⁱⁱ See the Bibliography for a list of the main sources: Li Lianjin for Pinghua and Cantonese, Liu Cunhan for Gui-Liu hua, the *Hán Việt Từ Điển* of Thiều Chửu for Hán-Việt, and Xie Jianyou for schoolhouse pronunciation.
- ⁱⁱⁱ D. Holm, *Mapping the Old Zhuang Character Script* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp.40–44, 744.
- ^{iv} Standard Chinese characters in Zhuang texts can be read in up to 12 different ways, including serial borrowings. See Holm, ‘A typology of readings’, *Cahiers LAO* 38:2 (2009), 245–292.
- ^v See the works listed in the Bibliography.
- ^{vi} I summarise here the discussion in Holm, *Killing a Buffalo for the Ancestors*, pp.79–80.
- ^{vii} Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991). The industry standard for Middle Chinese transcription is now the Baxter-Sagart system: see esp. William Baxter and Laurent Sagart, *Old Chinese: a New Reconstruction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- ^{viii} Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa* (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1957).
- ^{ix} Li Lianjin 李連進, *Pinghua yinyun yanjiu* 平話音韻研究 (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 2000), p.76. Nanning and Binyang are chosen for comparison because Pinghua-speaking merchants from these localities were particularly active in the highland areas of northwestern Guangxi.
- ^x *Buyiyu diaocha baogao* 布依語調查報告 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1959), item 0873, p.310.
- ^{xi} Holm, *Killing a Buffalo for the Ancestors*, pp.79–80.

- xii Ibid., pp.173–174.
- xiii This has parallels in the ‘recitation literacy’ of Mesoamerica. See Stephen D. Houston, ‘Literacy among the Pre-Columbian Maya: A Comparative Perspective’, pp.27–49.
- xiv See the discussion in the Introduction to Holm (2003) on Manuscript A and Manuscript B.
- xv On these issues see Holm (2003).
- xvi David Holm and Meng Yuanyao, tr. and annot., *Hanvueng: The Goose King and the Ancestral King* (Leiden: Brill 2015).
- xvii See Holm and Meng, *Hanvueng*, notes to lines 116, 151, 256, 274, 355, 783, and 830.
- xviii There may be more; these are only the instances which were salient enough to call for annotation. See Holm and Meng, *Hanvueng*, notes to lines 116, 122, 123, 185, 190, 256, 316, 355, 405, 720, 744, 881–882, and 928.
- xix See *Hanvueng*, notes to the lines 145, 190, 274, 783, 1073, 343.
- xx On this route see esp. Holm, ‘Mobility among the Tai Peoples of South China’, in Huang Ying-kuei, ed.-in-chief, *Kongjian yu wenhua changyu: Kongjian zhi yixiang, shijian yu shehui shengchan* Space and Cultural Fields: Spatial Images, Practices, and Social Production, Taipei: Center for Chinese Studies, 2009, 11–59.
- xxi *Ming shi* 明史, ‘Guangxi tusi er’ 廣西土司二 (repr. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p.8246.
- xxii See *Ming shilu* 明實錄 (Yongle 永樂 6th year, 3rd month), *Taizong shilu* 太宗實錄 77:3b (repr. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo 中央研究院歷史語言研究所, 1962), p.1046.
- xxiii *Ming shi*, ‘Guangxi tusi er’, p.8249.
- xxiv See Chen Ju 陳駒, ‘Zhuangzu “Zeige” de shidai beijing he ta yishu shang de xiaci’ 壯族《賊歌》的時代背景和它的藝術上的瑕疵, in Nong Guanpin 農冠品 et al., eds., *Lingnan wenhua yu Baiyue minfeng* 嶺南文化與百越民風(Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992), pp.287–292.
- xxv Luo Hantian 羅漢田, *Pingguo Zhuangzu liaoge: Zeigepian* 平果壯族嘹歌: 賊歌篇 (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2009), p.34.
- xxvi Taniguchi Fusao and Bai Yaotian, *Zhuangzu tuguan zupu jicheng*, p.169. Kangzhou is in present-day western Guangdong, just downstream from Wuzhou. Qiyuan zhou (Vn. Thất nguyên châu) was located in the northwestern part of Lạng Sơn, in a place also known as Thất Khê (Ch. Qixi 七溪), directly to the west of Longzhou 龍州. See Đào Duy Anh, *Đất*

Nước Việt Nam Qua Các Đời: Nghiên Cứu Địa Lý học lịch sử Việt Nam (Hà Nội: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa học xã hội, 1964), p.114. See also Taniguchi and Bai, p.171.

xxvii Taniguchi and Bai, p.169.

xxviii An Guolou 安國樓, *Songchao zhoubian minzu zhengce yanjiu* 宋朝周邊民族政策研究, Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1997, esp. pp.14–23.

xxix See He Dawei 賀大衛 [D. Holm], ‘Dongnanya, Guangxi xibu de mogong yu tusi zhengquan de guanxi’ 東南亞、廣西西部的麼公與土司政權的關係, *Baise xueyuan xuebao* 百色學院學報, 2013 no.2, 32–40.

xxx See Jerold Edmondson and Li Jinfang, ‘The Language Corridor’.

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List of Abbreviations

B	Zhang Shengzhen 張聲震, <i>Bu Luotuo jingshi yizhu</i> 布洛陀經詩譯注
BYHCD	Wu Qilu 吳啟祿 et al., <i>Buyi Han cidian</i> 布依漢詞典
BCETD	Somsonge Burusphat, <i>Bouyei-Chinese-English-Tai Dictionary</i>
BYDChBG	<i>Buyiyu diaocha baogao</i> 布依語調查報告
CT	Central Tai
EM	Early Mandarin
EMC	Early Middle Chinese
<i>Gailun</i>	Liang Min 梁敏 and Zhang Junru 張均如, <i>Dong-Tai yuzu gailun</i> 侗台語族概論
GSR	Bernhard Karlgren, <i>Grammata Serica Recensa</i>
GY	Zhou Zumo 周祖謨. ed., <i>Guangyun jiaoben</i> 廣韻校本
HCT	Li Fang Kuei, <i>Handbook of Comparative Tai</i>
HV	Hán Việt
HYDCD	<i>Hanyu dacidian</i> 漢語大詞典
HYFYZh	<i>Guangxi tongzhi: Hanyu fangyan zhi</i> 廣西通志: 漢語方言志
HZCH	<i>Han-Zhuang cihui</i> (chugao) 漢壯詞彙(初稿)
LMC	Late Middle Chinese
Mapping the OZS	Holm, <i>Mapping the Old Zhuang Character Script</i>
MSC	Modern Standard Chinese
NT	Northern Tai
OC	Old Chinese
Pb	Pulleyblank, <i>Lexicon of Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin</i>

PH	Pinghua
PKT	Proto-Kam-Tai
Snd	<i>Sawndip sawdenj</i>
SWM	Southwestern Mandarin
SWT	Southwestern Tai
YTZZD	Jiaoyubu <i>Yitizi zidian</i> 教育部異體字字典
ZHCH	<i>Zhuang-Han cihui</i> 壯漢詞彙
ZhYFYYJ	Zhang Junru 張均如 et al., <i>Zhuangyu fangyan yanjiu</i> 壯語方言研究
Ch.	Chinese
Zh.	Zhuang