

deserves a readership far beyond the academic world of studying China; read this book, and one will readily see the Chinese phrase “A Century of Humiliation” in a completely new light.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000563

Lü Shanshan: A Reference Grammar of Caijia: An Unclassified Language of Guizhou

(Sinitic Languages of China 8.) xxviii, 600 pp. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 2022, ISBN 978 3 11072480 6.

Andreas Hölzl

University of Potsdam, Potsdam, Germany
andreas.hoelzl@uni-potsdam.de

Caijia 蔡家 is a Trans-Himalayan (or Sino-Tibetan) language located in south-west China. While the Caijia people (or *mej²¹ni³³*) have been known from Chinese sources for several hundred years (p. 2), the language was only described in the 1980s. For a long time, the only widely accessible information about the language was a short grammatical sketch produced in Chinese by Bo Wenzhe 薄文泽 in 2004. The present book by Lü Shanshan 吕珊珊 represents the first comprehensive grammar of Caijia. It finally makes this remarkable language available for general linguists as well as researchers of the Mainland Southeast Asian (MSEA) area.

The Caijia language (or *mej²¹ni³³ŋoŋ³³*) is located in the Bijie prefecture-level city in the north-western part of Guizhou province and is estimated to have about 1,000 speakers (p. 1), although the number is declining and could already be lower. The present grammar is based on the author's doctoral dissertation and contains data from the Hezhang variety spoken in Xingfa Township that were collected during fieldwork from 2012 to 2015 (pp. 4–5).

Apart from the introduction (pp. 1–13) and a very brief conclusion (pp. 556–8), the grammar consists of 14 typologically informed chapters covering most topics of the Caijia language, including the phonology (pp. 14–44), the noun (pp. 45–103) and verb phrases (pp. 104–82), ditransitive constructions (pp. 183–99), causatives (pp. 200–18), passives (pp. 219–42) and differential object marking (pp. 243–62), comparative constructions (pp. 263–301), aspect (pp. 302–53), mood (pp. 354–414), negation (pp. 415–26) and questions (pp. 427–58), relative clauses (pp. 459–80), and, finally, clause linkage (pp. 481–555). The appendix contains two glossed texts (pp. 559–73) that might allow further analysis concerning aspects of the information structure. The grammar contains a plethora of analysed and glossed examples. The author consistently adds the Chinese translation to examples, which makes the grammar more accessible to scholars from China and, perhaps, the speech community.

Caijia shares many features of the MSEA languages, such as numeral classifiers (e.g. *nioŋ²⁴ (ji³³) ni³³* “girl (one) CLF”, p. 79), serial verb constructions, a tone system, little to no inflection (p. 11), and many monosyllabic words, e.g. *ŋoŋ³³* “heavy”. Final consonants are restricted to a few nasals (p. 33). Voiced plosives as in this word are unstable (p. 15) and can appear as voiceless (*tŋ³³*, p. 96). At least in some cases, voicedness could go back

to prenasalization, which is still preserved in the related language Longjia. Like most Sinitic languages, Caijia exhibits the rare combination of basic VO order with prenominal relative clauses. Caijia also has the typical Sinitic “disposal” construction, a kind of differential object marking that entails a change to OV order and a prepositional “object marker” derived from the verb a^{33} “to take” (p. 243 ff.). The same verb, in combination with the preposition s_7^{55} “to (< to give)”, is also employed to compensate for the lack of a productive verb for “to give” (p. 188).

The language has a complex tone system that contains five phonemic tones (55 , 33 , 22 , 21 , 24 , p. 37). One of the complicating factors is tone sandhi of which only one rule is currently fully understood: 33 changes to 21 before 55 (\hat{a}^{33} “to drink”, $\hat{a}^{21} s_7^{55}$ “to drink water”) (p. 38). The language furthermore utilizes tone changes as a morphological device for the formation of plural pronouns (ηo^{33} “1SG”, ηo^{24} “1PL”) and diminutives (ηo^{21} “cow”, ηo^{24} “calf”) (p. 43). However, for the moment much of the synchronic tonal variation remains unclear (pp. 37–42), which will be a fruitful topic for future research. Another interesting question for future research is dialectal variation. A case in point is a syntactic tone change identified by Lee Manhei for the Weining variety, in which some verbs change their tone depending on whether an object is present (zu^{21} “to eat”, zu^{33} + NP). The Hezhang variety described in the present book does not seem to share this phenomenon ($z\gamma^{21}$ “to eat”, $z\gamma^{21} sa\eta^{33}$ “to eat mushrooms”, pp. 30, 75).

Perhaps the only weakness of the grammar is the introduction, which would benefit from a description of the current social and cultural background of the speakers, a more critical view on traditional descriptions such as in so-called *Miao albums* (苗图), and a comprehensive discussion of the genetic classification of the Caijia language. For instance, the name *Caijia miao* 蔡家苗 found in older descriptions is translated as “Hmong of Caijia” (p. 2). However, *miao* 苗 used to be a general term for various non-Chinese groups in the area and cannot be equated with the name *Hmong*. Surprisingly, the section on previous research (p. 4) lacks references to work by scholars like Andrew Hsiu, Yu Min 喻敏, Zhang Yongbin 张永斌, or Lee Manhei 李文希. Especially the latter has made considerable progress in classifying Caijia as an archaic Sinitic language; see the recent summary in the paper “Phonological features of Caijia that are notable from a diachronic perspective”, *Journal of Historical Linguistics*, 2022. Despite the title referring to an unclassified language, the grammar, therefore, rightfully appeared in the series *Sinitic Languages of China*. The *Liupanshui zhi: minzu zhi* 六盘水市志：民族志 (Guiyang: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 2003) furthermore contains a brief Caijia word list written in Chinese characters (pp. 184–5), which demonstrates that the language formerly might have been more widespread than is often assumed.

Notwithstanding these minor issues, the book under discussion is a comprehensive reference grammar that fulfils the highest standards in the field and succeeds in making this fascinating language accessible to the general public. Since “Caijia is a dying language” (p. 558), the present grammar is all the more important for its ongoing documentation. It represents a milestone in the field and will remain an extremely important resource of the language for many years to come. The most important task for future description will be a comprehensive dictionary of the language.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000654