The Cun language, by Ouyang Jueya. Shanghai Far East Publishers. 1998.

by Weera Ostapirat

The Cun language is spoken on Hainan island and is closely related to, or is a member of, the Hlai language group of Kra-Dai stock (= Tai-Kadai). The early concise descriptions of the language (Fu 1983, Ouyang and Fu 1988) noted a number of interesting linguistic features so this more complete study is welcome. Ouyang's book now supplies us with the most comprehensive survey of Cun, including a list of 2,330 vocabulary items, which are especially useful for the comparative and historical studies of Hlai and related languages. The author of the book, Ouyang Jueya, is also a co-author of the monumental study of Hlai dialects *Liyu Diaocha Baogao* (Survey of the Hlai languages) published in 1983.

The first chapter of the book introduces readers to the ethnological and sociological background of the Cun people and their language. The Cun people call themselves /ŋa:u¹ fɔn¹/ 'village people' and call their language /tshən¹ fɔn¹/ 'village language'. Approximately 45,000 Cun speakers are reported to live among the majority Chinese in Dongfang county; a large amount of Chinese is used in current Cun speech.

The phonological features of Cun are described in Chapter 2. The Cun initial consonant inventory lacks the voiceless unaspirated stops /p-/ and /t-/ but has a full set of aspirated stops and affricates /ph th tsh kh/. Cun also has an affricate /tθ-/, which is unique among Hlai dialects.

The sound corresponds to s- (> t- in some dialects) and to ɬ- in other dialects.

	Cun	Xifang	Baoding
thread, v.	tθɔk^2	sɔk^7	tok˧˩
wash	tθak^2	soːk^7	toːk^7
blood	tθɔt^2	ɬoːt^7	ɬaːtɕ˧˩
tongue	tθin^3	ɬiŋ^3	ɬiːn^3

Cun appears to lack the ending -ɯ. For the rimes -aɯ and -eɯ in other Hlai dialects, the Cun reflexes are -ɔ and -ou, respectively.

	Cun	Baoding
short (height)	thɔ^3	thaɯ^3
dry	khɔ^5	khaɯ^2
leaf	bou^1	beɯ^1
hand	mou^1	meɯ^1

The rimes transcribed as -a(i), -ɔ(i), and -o(i) deserve a comment. The parenthesized ending (i) in these rimes is weak and usually elided in word-final position; it emerges in compounds when it is followed by another morpheme. The rimes -a(i) and -ɔ(i) are marked in early transcriptions (Fu 1983) with long vowels, i.e. -aː(i) and ɔː(i), and typically correspond to -aːi and -oːi in such Hlai dialects as Baoding. These are not to be confused with Cun -ai and -ɔi, where the ending -i is always stable.

	Cun	Baoding
excrement	ha(i)³	ha:i³
far	lai¹	lai¹
many	tθɔ(i)¹	ɬo:i¹
hot, ripe	fɔi¹	fui¹

In words with labial initials, Cun rime -o(i) corresponds to -ei in other dialects.

	Cun	Baoding
fire	fo(i)¹	fei¹
walk	fo(i)¹	fei¹
this	nεi³	nei²
lean, adj.	lεi	lei

Since this (i) may be discerned only when it precedes another morpheme, it can be easily missed in transcriptions when the words occur in isolation or at word-final position. For instance, the word 'fire' is transcribed as /fo¹/ in the Appendix (p.193) but as /fo(i)¹/ in the rime description section (p.21). Early transcriptions of the word in Ouyang and Fu 1988 as well as the expected sound correspondences confirm the latter form. Otherwise the Cun rime -o is not typically found in native words. Thus, some caution is thus needed in such cases when using the lexical list.

Cun has five tones, labelled with the numbers 1 to 5. The pitch values of these tones are as follows:

Tone 1	Tone 2	Tone 3	Tone 4	Tone5
35; 55	33	42	13	21

All tones may occur with smooth or checked syllables. (In checked syllables, the pitch value of Tone 1 is [55]). In native words, however, only Tone 2 and Tone 4 typically occur with checked syllables. These tones reflect the Proto-Hlai tonal categories and correspond systematically to the tones of other Hlai dialects as follows:

Tones	Cun	Yuanmen	Baoding	
*A1	khai^1	khai^1	khai^1	chicken
*A2	vɛŋ^4	viaŋ^4	ve:ŋ^1	master
*B1	khɔ^5	khaɯ^5	khaɯ^2	dry
*B2	vɔ^5	va^2	va^2	shoulder
*C1	thɔ^3	thaɯ^3	thaɯ^3	short (height)
*C2	la(i)^4	ruai^6	ra:i^3	intestine
*D1	phɛk^2	phiaʔ^7	phe:k^7	high
*D2	viat^4	vat^8	vat̬	bow, n.

Basic descriptions of word classes, morphology, and syntax are presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. An interesting morpheme ki^5 is reported to prefix to a number of lexical items, namely, body parts, animals, and plants. Cun has borrowed numeral forms from Chinese and presently keeps the native forms (corresponding to the basic Hlai roots) only for numerals from one to six. The heavy influence of Chinese has also extended to syntax. In some cases, Cun uses both native and Chi-

nese-influenced expressions side by side. For instance, the phrase 'my clothes' may be expressed in the native word order /vɛŋ⁴ kə⁵/, literally 'clothes' + 'I', or in the Chinese order /kə⁵ di² vɛŋ⁴/, literally 'I' + possessive particle di² (Chinese /de/) + 'clothes'.

The last Chapter is devoted to discussion of the relationship of Cun to the more closely-related Hlai and the more distantly-related Kam-Tai (Zhuang-Dong) languages. On the basis of statistical lexical comparisons, Ouyang concludes that Cun is more closely related to Hlai than to Tai and Kam-Sui. The average percentages of shared vocabularies (from around 900 lexical items) claimed by the author are 38.55% (Cun and Hlai) versus 23.39% (Cun and Tai) and 22.77% (Cun and Kam-Sui). Using similar kinds of statistics, on the other hand, the author further notes that the percentage of lexical items shared between Cun and Hlai dialects is much lower than the percentages shared among the known Hlai dialects (usually around 60-70%). The author thus proposes that Cun is closely related to the Hlai group of languages but does not belong to it.

It is interesting to note that the smaller the lexicon used for comparison is, the higher the percentage of items shared between Cun and Hlai. The figures of shared lexical percentages between Cun and Baoding dialect, for example, are as follows:

Compared words	Shared words	Percentage shared
1614 items	535 items	33.15%

| 908 items | 368 items | 40.53% |
| 132 items | 92 items | 69.7% |

Since Cun has come under the heavy Chinese influence for extended period of time (Ouyang counts about 755 Chinese lexical items in his Cun material), the relatively low percentage of shared words between Cun and Hlai dialects most likely has resulted from the increasing replacement of native forms by Chinese loans with the basic vocabulary being more resistant to borrowing than the non-basic, cultural vocabulary. In short, the low percentages when dealing with large numbers of lexical items may not necessarily reflect the genetic distance between Cun and Hlai but instead may indicate the intensity of Chinese influence and contact on Cun after it split off from Proto-Hlai.

As a Chinese dialectologist, Ouyang has also paid considerable attention to the Chinese elements in Cun, devoting 42 pages in Chapter 2 to the comparison of the sounds of the Chinese loans in Cun with Middle Chinese and to describing the variation between literary and colloquial pronunciations. A list of Chinese loans is also included in the Appendices, together with Chinese dialect forms including Mandarin and Hainanese (Danzhou dialect).

In sum, the book is a valuable addition to the field of comparative Hlai studies. Students of Chinese dialectology and readers who are interested in the issues of language contact and Chinese loans in minority languages will also find it particularly useful and interesting.

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