

Two compilatory principles underlying *A Jinghpo-Chinese Dictionary*

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ABSTRACT

A Jinghpo-Chinese Dictionary (1983) is the first one of its kind published in China. Since it is intended for general use, its entries are not confined to any particular field. The writing of this dictionary recognized the need to reflect the social and linguistic characteristics of the Jinghpo people systematically and comprehensively. In order to accomplish this, compilation was based on two principles: the ethnological principle, and the linguistic principle. This paper describes how those principles were upheld in selecting entries, deciding upon a general schema for all entries, providing a pronunciation guide, and precise glossing in Chinese. Using many citations from the dictionary as examples, this paper also demonstrates how some compilatory problems were solved.

0. Introduction

The Jinghpo (=Jinghpaw=Kachin) ethnic minority in China, with a relatively small population of 119,209 (in 1990), inhabits the southwestern border area adjacent to Burma. The writing system of the Jinghpo language has a short history; its alphabet was only created at the end of the 19th century. Published in December 1983, *A Jinghpo-Chinese Dictionary (JCD)* is the first dictionary in China explaining Jinghpo words and phrases in Chinese. Not only has it become an important reference for research on the Jinghpo language and culture, it has also contributed to the development of language standardization, bilingualism, and education among Jinghpo people.

This dictionary is successful in that it is useful to the general public and it is based on scientific research and sound principles. Specifically, the compilers followed what the author refers to as “the ethnological principle” and “the linguistic principle”.

1. The ethnological principle

A language dictionary should comprehensively reflect the distinct characteristics of the ethnic group who speak the language. This is the “the ethnological principle”. To achieve this end, the lexicographer needs to decide what words to include and how those words should be glossed.

- 1.1 Dictionary compilers should properly decide upon several ratios between different groups of lexical items:

a. The ratio between common and uncommon words

A dictionary for general use should include as many common words as possible. Common words include those words frequently used by the whole speech community, as well as those words used by a particular profession, social class, and/or region. For example, although older Jinghpo people may not use ink, it is indispensable to students and the educated, so the Jinghpo word for ink, **laika tsi**, is included.

On the other hand, the dictionary should also include a certain amount of uncommon words which are of high cultural value. They are useful for studying Jinghpo art, social history, religious beliefs, philosophy, etc. For example:

manau [mä³¹nau³¹] <n.> the **manau** festival (a traditional Jinghpo festival, including activities such as worshipping the Gods of Sun and Heaven, singing epics about the origin of man and of the Jinghpo people, and communal dancing)

{A breve as in [mä] denotes a weakened syllable.}

njang [n³³tʃaŋ³³] <n.> a mourning stand or table (placed next to the worshipping hall near the back door of a house, for putting things formerly used by the deceased and food used in worshipping)

nkon du [n³¹kɔn³¹ tu³³] <n.> a hereditary **bum du** for collecting taxes
{**Bum du** is a the leader in a stockaded village.}

{An underlined vowel is a tense vowel.}

chye ningchyang [tʃe³³ niŋ³¹tʃaŋ³¹] <n.> God of Wisdom

b. The ratio between obsolete words and words that are still in use

Examples should be given in glosses to further illustrate the meaning of obsolete words. In addition to words that are still in use, *JCD* also includes some obsolete words (or morphemes), most of which are preserved in literary language. For example:

lang [laŋ³¹] <n., literary> mount: Bum go bum mada, ~ go lang chya.
'A hill pairs off with another hill, so does a mount with another'
(referring to families or a couple well-matched in social and economic status).

ba [ba²³¹] <v., literary> return to, revisit: Sumhtang mabai ~, ahkang zinya hta. 'Returning to a once familiar place; setting foot on familiar ground.'

Obsolete words (or morphemes) that are chosen should have a high cultural value and/or the possibility of entering into the modern lexical system through new words or phrases.

c. The ratio between native and loan words

Native words should naturally form the bulk of a Jinghpo dictionary, but loanwords should also be listed. We have selected loanwords that have been borrowed for a relatively long time and are extensively used. Some loanwords in *JCD* are as follows:

From Chinese:

son	[son ³³]	<v.>	calculate
sonhpan	[son ³³ phan ³¹]	<n.>	abacus
hpun	[phun ³¹]	<measure word>	a unit of weight [about 0.5 kg.--Translator]

{[ph] in transcription = an aspirated IPA [p]}

From the Dai language:

makchyok hpun	[mak ³¹ tʃok ³¹ phun ⁵⁵]	<n.>	tangerine tree
joi	[tʃoi ³³]	<n.>	steelyard

From Burmese:

dat	[tat ⁵⁵]	<n.>	electricity
nayi	[na ³³ ji ³³]	<n.>	(1) clock; (2) watch

We have, however, been cautious about new words. In general, only new words that are consistently used in colloquial speech were chosen. For example:

tša shaning	[tša ³³ qã ³¹ niŋ ³³]	<n.>	century
go maden	[ko ³³ mǎ ³¹ ten ³¹]	<v.>	build, establish
nachyam	[na ³¹ tɔam ⁵⁵]	<n.>	experimental plot or field

Very recent loans that do not have a fixed form or are only used by a small number of people should be chosen only after careful consideration.

1.2 *JCD* also supplies information about the Jinghpo people's ethno-characteristics in its gloss. For example, kinship terms in the language reflect the existence of consanguineous marriages in the past. The Chinese explanation of these terms reflects this fact:

- nu** [nu⁵¹] <n.> (1) mother (including mother's sisters, wives of father's brothers, and wives of males of father's generation having the same surname as the father or the mother's sisters' husbands); (2) a respectful term of address for old women. (In both meanings, the word is used when talking to the addressee directly.)
- la** [la³³] <n.> (1) man; (2) male: ~ gasha "male child"; (3) husband

Detailed explanations are also provided to explain words that deal with Jinghpo production and livelihood. For example:

- duhprenŋ** [tu³¹phzeŋ³¹] <n.> a way to build a grass hut (i.e. cogon grass is first laid flatly and then pressed down by bamboo strips)

The Jinghpo language has many idioms and proverbs that are characteristic of the Jinghpo culture. *JCD* has recorded as many of them as possible. For example:

- da-ma** [ta³¹maʔ³³] <n.> son-in-law or the family of his parents: (*proverb*)
~ yon yang go mayu laka tso, mayu yon yang go ja hte galo. 'If the father-in-law is offended, apologies can be given to him; but if the son-in-law is offended, it can only result in his not setting foot in the

father-in-law's home' (No apologies can be offered to the son-in-law, a member of the younger generation).

gola [koʔ³¹la³¹] <n.> a male hornbill: (*proverb*) ~ malai go n nga ai, goyi malai she nga ai. 'The male hornbill [i.e. the husband] cannot be replaced, but the female [i.e. the wife] can' (a reflection of former marriage institution).

2. The linguistic principle

By 'the linguistic principle', we mean that a language dictionary should reflect the linguistic characteristics of a language. Based on this principle, several glossing conventions were used in *JCD*. They are as follows:

2.1 IPA transcription. The Jinghpo alphabet has two limitations; it does not show the tone of a morpheme or the tenseness of the vowel after initial nasals, laterals, or fricatives. Each entry in the dictionary is therefore immediately followed by a transcription in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) so that readers can learn the pronunciation of the headword. For example:

mang	[maŋ ³³]	<n.>	corpse
mang	[maũ ³³]	<n.>	purple
rong	[ʒoŋ ⁵⁵]	<n.>	lock or pen in
rong	[ʒoŋ ⁵⁵]	<adv.>	somewhat tall and thin

In addition, there is an appendix describing the phonological system and the correspondence between the (combinations of) letters and Jinghpo phonemes.

2.2 Variant forms of a lexical item. Many Jinghpo morphemes have more than one phonetic and/or graphemic form. For example:

num ~ mā:			
numnang	[num ³¹ naŋ ³³]	(same as manang)	<n.> companion, partner
numga	[num ³¹ ka ⁵⁵]	(same as maga)	<n.> side, direction: dingda ~ 'the south'
num ~ n:			
numhpu	[num ⁵⁵ phu ⁵¹]	(same as nhpu)	<n.> dust and dirt
numya	[num ³³ ja ³³]	(same as n-ya)	<n.> Mars
niŋ ~ n:			
ningwa	[niŋ ³¹ wa ³³]	(same as nwa)	<n.> axe
ninghtu	[niŋ ³¹ thu ³³]	(same as nhthu)	<n.> knife

Words having two pronunciations with a different tone:

wai [wai⁵⁵, wai³¹] <v.> (the time for flowers to blossom and fruit-bearing, or the period of puberty) to have passed
gahtet [kã³¹thet³¹, kã³¹thet⁵⁵] <adj.> hot

Variation between lax and tense vowels:

- zunbo** [tsun³¹po³³] (same as **tsunbo**) <*n.*> a bamboo fence for fishing at where a river branches out
- chyok** [tʃok³¹] (same as **jok**) <*measure word*> lump, heap
 {tsunbo [tsun³³po³³]; jok [tʃok³¹]}

Variant forms mark a transitional period in diachronic change. They may provide clues to the ancient forms of some morphemes, or they may be related to some social factors. The recording of these variant forms facilitates the standardization of the Jinghpo language, and helps the users of the dictionary.

2.3 In order to give a concise Chinese gloss to Jinghpo lexical items, the semantic systems of the two languages were carefully considered. Many Jinghpo words have no counterparts in Chinese, or the corresponding words or phrases in Chinese and Jinghpo do not have exactly the same meaning(s). The following solutions were adopted for this problem:

a. If there is no equivalent Chinese word or phrase for a Jinghpo entry, then a full explanation is provided. For example:

- ba-ja** [pa³³tʃa³³] <*n.*> a type of *sheng* (consisting of three vertical wooden tubes and a leather bag at the bottom)
 {The *sheng* is the Chinese name for a reed pipe wind instrument.}
- banhkung** [pan³¹khun³¹] <*n.*> the name of a flower (which is white in color, with leaves the size of a palm, and having a fragrant smell and a root similar to that of ginger)
- nngai** [n³¹ŋai³³] <*sentence-final particle*> used in declarative sentences, when the subject is first person singular and the verb is in the existent mode
 {the existent mode = the unmarked mode}

b. If an equivalent word exists in the local variety of Chinese, but not in *putonghua*, the national variety, then that word is used, with further details added in parenthesis.

- ba-hkyi** [pa³¹khji⁵⁵] *shaqiu* (a type of small fish that lives in stream sands and looks like loaches)
 {shaqiu is the *putonghua* pronunciation for two Chinese characters meaning SAND and LOACH respectively.}
- sha-ji** [ʃa⁵⁵tʃi⁵⁵] <*n.*> a sort of food for chewing, made up of **sha-ji** fruit, tobacco, lime, etc.)
- banhteng** [pan³¹theŋ³¹] <*n.*> unploughed paddy fields after harvest

c. If a Jinghpo word has a special usage, then it is mentioned:

- ba** [pa³¹] <*n.*> elder brother (direct address)
- namlap namlo** [nam³¹lap³¹ nam³¹lo³³] <*n.*> leaves (referring to leaves collectively)

d. If the corresponding words in Chinese and Jinghpo are not co-extensive in their meaning, then qualifying phrases are added to the Chinese gloss:

- amam** [a³¹mam⁵⁵] <*v.*> (of the eyes) to become dim

- amop** [a³¹mop³¹] <*v.*> (of people without teeth) to chew
ba-byep [pa^{ʔ31}pjep⁵⁵] <*adj.*> [of a roof] slightly slanting
daudau [tau³³tau³³] <*adv.*> (of lips) thick
hpu [phu⁵¹] <*n.*> elder brothers (including male cousins, wife's elder sisters' husbands, and elder males of the same family name and generation; direct address)

- e. Many Jinghpo words have features different from their Chinese counterparts. These features are noted:

- chyng ba-ja hpung** [tʃi³³ pa³³tʃa³³ phuŋ³³] <*n.*> a band (of drums and *sheng*'s)
da [ta^{ʔ31}] <*v.*> (using big leaves) to wrap (cooked rice, or meat and vegetables)

- 2.4 Some glosses include grammatical features of the headwords. For example, if it is possible to reduplicate part of a noun serving as the subject to form a subject + verb phrase, an example is given in the gloss:

- nbug** [n³¹puŋ³³] <*n.*> wind: ~ bung 'the wind is blowing or starts to blow'

The semantic difference between a single morpheme and its reduplication is also noted:

- hpuhpu** [phu⁵⁵phu⁵⁵] <*adv.*> be stuck with (something) all over (to a greater extent than *hpu* alone)
chyokchyok [tʃok³¹tʃok³¹] <*adv.*> in a repeatedly poking or stabbing hard manner

The dictionary also includes many adverbial phrases, which form a class of expressions unique to the Jinghpo language. For example:

- ahpu ahpre** [a³¹phu³¹ a³¹phze³¹] <*adv.*> in an extremely awkward manner: Hpyen ni ~ rai hprong mat wa masai. 'The enemy has fled helter-skelter.'
ahpu ahpa [a³¹phu³¹ a³¹pha³¹] <*adv.*> in a shaking or jerking manner

Other grammatical features are also mentioned:

- chyon** [tʃon³³] <*adj.*> diligent, hardworking (usually used in negative sentences)

- 2.5 *JCD* also lists some very productive bound morphemes. Some of them are grammatical morphemes, others are lexical. For example;

- bu-** [pu³¹] trousers or dress: bugot 'short trousers'
do- [to^{ʔ31}] pillar: dohpum 'large pillar'
go- [ko³³] foot: gosen 'little feet [i.e. bound feet]'

a- [a⁵⁵] prefixed to a verb to show that the action is very frequent

These entries will give the dictionary users a better understanding of the meaning of morphemes in a word. In addition, phrases with special internal structure are given as examples in the gloss:

chyu [tʃu^{ʔ55}] <n.> (1) the breast; (2) milk
 <v.> to give milk to a baby:
 chyu chyu 'to breast-feed'
 {literally BREAST + BREAST-FEED}

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REFERENCE

Xu, Xijian, Xiao Jiacheng, Nhkum Seng Hkum [= Yue Xiangkun], and Dai Qingxia. 1983. *Jing-Han Cidian* [A Jinghpo-Chinese Dictionary]. Kunming: Yunnan Minzu Chubanshe [Yunnan Nationalities Publishing House]. [Original Jinghpo title: *Jinghpo Miwa Ga Ginsi Chyun*. 32mo, xii, 1024 pp.]