

A Grammar of Maonan

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Tian Qiao Lu



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Author's Preface

The drafting of this volume began in 2004, aiming to undertake a full description of the Maonan language. It accounts for the syntax and lexicalization patterns of Maonan from a typological and ethno-linguistic perspective. It also documents the Maonan language as a communicative system that mirrors social and cultural interaction among members of the Maonan community, as well as between speakers of Maonan and adjacent social groups. Particular attention is paid to the interplay between syntax and semantics, as well as the influence from nearby languages on the phonological, syntactic and semantic structure of the Maonan language.

Studies on Maonan language and culture are relatively limited compared with many other members of the Kam-Tai group.

Chinese linguists began preliminary study on Maonan in the 1950s and 1960s. Professor Zheng Guoqiao was probably the first to document the Maonan language. In the 1980s, Professors Liang Min and Zhang Junru supplied new data from their fieldwork in Luocheng County. The result was a brief description of the language, *Maonan Yu Jianzhi* (A Sketch on the Maonan Language), published in 1983. This general sketch offers a brief description of the phonological system along with some aspects of the grammar. About a thousand vocabulary items were recorded. In *Dong Tai Yu Gailun* (An Introduction to the Kam-Tai Languages) (1990), Professor Ni Dabai presents a brief introduction to Maonan. Mr. Tan Yuanyang, now a law-officer in Huanjiang County who is a native of Maonan, published an article on Maonan synonyms in the journal *Minzu Yuwen* (Minority Languages of China) in 1986. Professor Li Jinfang has compiled a Maonan wordlist for the Intercontinental Dictionary Series published by the Max Planck Institute. He also conducted studies on *Chadong*, a Kam-Sui language which appears to be related to Maonan. Dr. Zhang Jingni came out with an analysis of Maonan verbs in 2006.

Work on Maonan culture has been carried out mainly by Maonan intellectuals. Mr. Meng Guorong published a book in 1999 on Maonan redemption rituals. He is also the co-author of two books on Maonan culture (Meng, Tan *et al.* 1988) and Maonan customs (Lu and Meng 1994). Mr. Qin Zikun, deputy curator of the Huanjiang House of Culture, is involved in a project collecting first-hand materials on Maonan culture.

Work on Maonan remains scarce in western literature. In his *Killing a Buffalo for the Ancestors*, Professor David Holm has provided a detailed account of the cultural and religious rituals of the Zhuang and Bouyei peoples, with reference to Maonan (Holm 2003).

The present study can be regarded as an attempt to examine in considerable detail the word formation, typological properties, grammaticalization and lexicalization processes of the Maonan language.

Fieldwork was done prior to the author's PhD program in the University of Melbourne on the suggestion of Dr. Luo Yongxian, the primary supervisor, and was undertaken in two stages. Preliminary fieldwork was carried out in May and June 2004, in which some initial investigation was conducted in Bochuan village in Xianan Township, during which the author became familiar with daily expressions. A longer trip was carried out during April-November 2005 in Xianan village and Si'en Township. By this time the author's competence in Maonan had improved considerably. The author began to converse in Maonan with the consultants. After returning to the university, the author stayed in touch with the consultants by communicating with them via telephone calls and emails to verify data used in the book. The author's command of Maonan won high praises from some of the native speakers. One of them said, 'your pronunciation is even better than mine as I have been working in the Han area for the last two decades and have not spoken Maonan ever since'. This was indeed a rewarding experience. During fieldwork, apart from spoken discourse involving daily conversation, 50 folk stories were recorded, 30 of which have been transcribed. Many of the examples used in the book are taken from these stories, other from personal communication with native speakers.

This study offers a functional-typological description of the Maonan language. Chapter one presents an introduction to the language, culture, social structure and demographic situation of the Maonan people. Chapter Two offers an account of the sound system, followed by an investigation of word formation and morphological processes in Chapter Three. Chapter Four provides a functional-typological sketch of Maonan syntax. Discussion includes word order, interrogatives, negation, imperative, comparative constructions, purposive and resultative constructions, relative clause and existential sentence. Grammatical relations are the subject of Chapter Five. Topics include semantic roles, nominative/accusative marking of classifier doublets, the relation between subject

and object, subject and topic, passivity, transitivity, serial verbs, causative construction, disposal construction and information structure. Chapter Six examines tense and aspect, along with related grammatical operators such as clause final particles. Chapter Seven analyzes the grammaticalization and lexicalization patterns. Chapter Eight sums up the findings of the book and proposes directions for future research.

This analysis is not without defects, particularly with respect to questions of acoustic analysis of the voiced and pre-glottalized initials. Unfortunately the author was not able to make any decent recording for laboratory analysis due to limited time and instruments during the fieldwork.

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My thanks also go to the staff in the East Asian Collections of the Ballieu Library of the University of Melbourne who assisted me with reference materials.

For their generous help, I would like to thank my Maonan friends during my fieldwork. Most of the data presented in this book were provided by Mr. Tan Xingai from Zhongnan Village, my main consultant. My deepest gratitude goes to Mr. Qin Shuitang, director of Huanjiang Highway Bureau, for his generosity in providing a free apartment where we lived and worked for more than seven months. Many of the following people were involved throughout the fieldwork, to whom I am indebted in very many ways. They include: Huang Huinuo, Lu

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Abbreviations and symbols

Kinship abbreviations:

F	Father
M	Mother
B	Brother
Z	Sister
G	Sibling
C	Child, children
S	Son
D	Daughter
H	Husband
W	Wife
E	Spouse
e	Elder
y	Younger
FFF	Father's father's father
FFM	Father's father's mother
FMF	Father's mother's father
FMM	Father's mother's mother
FF	Father's father
FM	Father's mother
FFG	Father's father's sibling
FFGE	Father's father's sibling's spouse
FMG	Father's mother's sibling

FMGE	Father's mother's sibling's spouse
MF	Mother's father
MM	Mother's mother
MFG	Mother's father's sibling
MFGE	Mother's father's sibling's spouse
MMG	Mother's mother's sibling
MMGE	Mother's mother's sibling's spouse
F	Father
M	Mother
FG	Father's sibling
FGE	Father's sibling's spouse
MG	Mother's sibling
MGE	Mother's sibling's spouse
HF	Husband's father
HM	Husband's mother
WF	Wife's father
WM	Wife's mother
EgoG	Ego's sibling
EgoGE	Ego's sibling's spouse
FBC	Father's brother's child
FBCE	Father's brother's child's spouse
MBC	Mother's brother's child
MBCE	Mother's brother's child's spouse
FZC	Father's sister's child
FZCE	Father's sister's child's spouse

MZC	Mother's sister's child
MZCE	Mother's sister's child's spouse
H	Husband
HG	Husband's sibling
HGE	Husband's sibling's spouse
W	Wife
WG	Wife's sibling
WGE	Wife's sibling's spouse
EgoC	Ego's child
EgoCE	Ego's child's spouse
eBC	Elder brother's child
eBCE	Elder brother's child's spouse
yBC	Younger brother's child
yBCE	Younger brother's child's spouse
ZC	Sister's child
ZCE	Sister's child's spouse
SC	Son's child
SCE	Son's child's spouse
DC	Daughter's child
DCE	Daughter's child's spouse
SSC	Son's son's child
SSCE	Son's son's child's spouse
SDC	Son's daughter's child
SDCE	Son's daughter's child's spouse

Symbols:

- Elder sister
- ▲ Elder brother
- Younger sister or sister
- △ Younger brother or brother
- Ego
- Sibling relation
- ↓ Lineal relation
- = Marriage
- ≠ Unmarriageable
- *- Ungrammatical or proto-form
- ?- Uncommon

Other abbreviations:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1PL:EXCL | First person plural exclusive |
| 1PL:INCL | First person plural inclusive |
| 1SG | First person singular |
| 1SG:POS | Possessive pronoun of first person singular |
| 2PL | Second person plural |
| 2SG | Second person singular |
| 2SG:POS | Possessive pronoun of second person singular |
| 3PL | Third person plural |
| 3SG | Third person singular |
| ASP:DUR | Durative aspect |
| ASP:EXP | Experiential aspect |

ASP:INCEP	Inceptive aspect
MANN	Manner marker
ASP:PFC	Perfective aspect
ASP:SUCC	Successive aspect
ASP:TENT	Tentative aspect
CL	Classifier
INSTRU	Instrument marker
COP	Copula
COV	Coverb
DISPO	Disposal marker
DEM	Demonstrative
DO	Direct object
EXCL	Exclamation
FOC	Focus adverb
IO	Indirect object
MANN	Manner marker
NP _A	Noun phrase (agentive)
NP _P	Noun phrase (patient)
PASS	Passive marker
PCL:ADEQ	Particle expressing adequateness
PCL:AFFIR	Particle expressing affirmation
PCL:ALLEV	Particle indicating alleviative interrogative
PCL:ATTEN	Particle of attention arouser
PCL:CONFIR	Particle of confirmation
PCL:CONSUL	Particle of consultative

PCL:CRS	Particle of currently relevant state
PCL:CRS:Q	Particle of question of currently relevant state
PCL:EMPH	Particle of emphasis
PCL:EXT	Particle of extent
PCL:GEN	Particle of genitive
PCL:HES:POSTU	Particle of hesitant postulation
PCL:JUX	Particle of juxtaposition
PCL:LIMIT	Particle of limitation
PCL:LIMIT:AFFIR	Particle of limitation and affirmation
PCL:PFC:Q	Particle of question of perfectiveness
PCL:Q	Particle of question
PCL:REMIN:CRS	Particle of reminder of change of currently relevant state
PCL:REMIN:CRS:AFFIR	Particle of reminder of currently relevant state in an affirmation manner
PCL:REMIN:CRS:CONSUL	Particle of reminder of change of currently relevant state in a consultative manner
PCL:REMIN:CRS:HES:POSTU	Particle of reminder of change of currently relevant state with hesitant postulation
PCL:REMIN:CRS:WARN	Particle of reminder of change of currently relevant state in a warning manner
PCL:RHET:Q	Particle of rhetorical question
PCL:UNCERT	Particle of uncertainty
PCL:WARN	Particle of warning
POS	Possessive marker
PRE	Prefix

PREP	Preposition
PURP	Purposive marker
RESUL	Resultative marker
S _A	Subject functioning as agent
S _O	Subject functioning as object
S _P	Subject functioning as patient
ØS	Empty subject
SUFF	Suffixal syllable
Vt	Transitive verb

Illustrations

1. Maonan distributed counties

