An Overview of Negation in the Yi Languages*
—Geolinguistic analysis of Yi character maps and a preliminary report on negation in Sani Yi—

Iwasa Kazue

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies

Summary

This paper consists of an outline of negation in the languages of the Yi ethnic group in China and a preliminary report on negation in Sani Yi (ISO 639-3ysn), classified as one of the subdialects of the Southeastern dialect by the official classification in China. In the former part, a general overview of negation in the Yi languages is shown along with results of an analysis of maps of Yi characters with respect to negatives.

Based on these results, first, negative words of the Yi languages in China phonetically divided into two groups: the MA group and the A group. Second, prohibitive words, however, converge into one group, the THA group. In one group, both negative and prohibitive words seem to be infixal, while that is not the case in another group (there are some exceptions). Third, maps of Yi characters denoting negation and their geolinguistic analysis will be shown.

On the one hand, with regard to negative words expressing "not", there is a clear difference between the MA and A groups in the character shapes. Nevertheless, a few characters in the Mojiang area of the MA group demonstrate a notable similarity to those of group A. This may indicate two possibilities: 1. All the characters used for the negation "not" were logographic and their pronunciations may have changed according to dialect or context; or 2. Within the Yi languages, the negative words might have been freely pronounced either as *a or *ma, and their pronunciation gradually changed. On the other hand, there are three groups of Yi characters used for prohibition: Groups 1, 2, and 3. Their geographic distribution and possibilities of phonetic loan will be mentioned.

In the latter part, negation in Sani Yi based on both previous studies and the author's on-site data will be discussed as a case study. The author's data have revealed several features of negation in Sani Yi, such as the neutralisation of tense in negative sentences and morpho-syntactic change in negative forms owing to influences from Chinese.

Key words: Yi languages, negation, Yi character maps, geolinguistics, Sani Yi

關鍵詞：彝語、否定、彝文地圖、語言地理學、撒尼彝語

1. Introduction

1.1   The Yi ethnic group and their languages

The Yi ethnic group dwell in southwestern China as well as the northern parts of Vietnam and Laos.[1] The population of the Yi ethnic group in China is approximately 8.7 million, according to the Sixth National Population Census of the People's Republic of China, 2010.[2]

The group of languages spoken by the Yi people, known as Yiyu (彝語) in China, belongs to the Lolo-Burmese language group of the Tibeto-Burman language family. According to the official classification in China, it has six dialects: Northern, Southern, Western, Eastern, Southeastern and Central.[3] Four of these, namely Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Southeastern, possess their own scripts, and numerous manuscripts have been written in them.

Sani Yi, which will be focused on in the latter part of this paper, belongs to Yiliang (宜良) subdialect of the Southeastern dialect. It has maintained its script hitherto.

The Yi languages are analytic, SVO, and head-modifier type. From phonological perspectives, they are tonal and basically open-syllabic except for loan words from Chinese. In addition, it is well known that many of them have such a vocalic distinction as constrictive and non-constrictive in vowels.

As mentioned above, four of the Yi dialects in China have their own characters, which are in the process from ideographic to syllabic, while *Guifan Yiwen* (規範彝文), which are broadly propagated and utilised in Liangshan, Sichuan, are completely syllabic.

Unlike the Modern Yi script of *Guifan Yiwen*, which was designed for universal use, the Old Yi script was not used as a communication tool. It used to be employed exclusively by the *bimos*, religious leaders of the Yi people, and was kept secret from generation to generation within each paternal *bimo* clan. Such individual use and the hereditary nature of Yi characters must have caused countless allographs and might also have led to huge differences in their forms and pronunciations of Yi characters amongst the four Yi-script-active dialectal regions.

---

[1] The residence areas of the Yi people are indicated by a white translucent circle on Map 1.

[2] The population of the Yi ethnic people in Vietnam and Laos is as follows: 4,541 in Vietnam, according to the 2009 Vietnam Population and Housing Census; 2,203 in Laos, according to Results of Population and Housing Census 2015. Here, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Shimizu Masaaki from Osaka University who kindly provided me with the data of Vietnam.

[3] See Map 2.
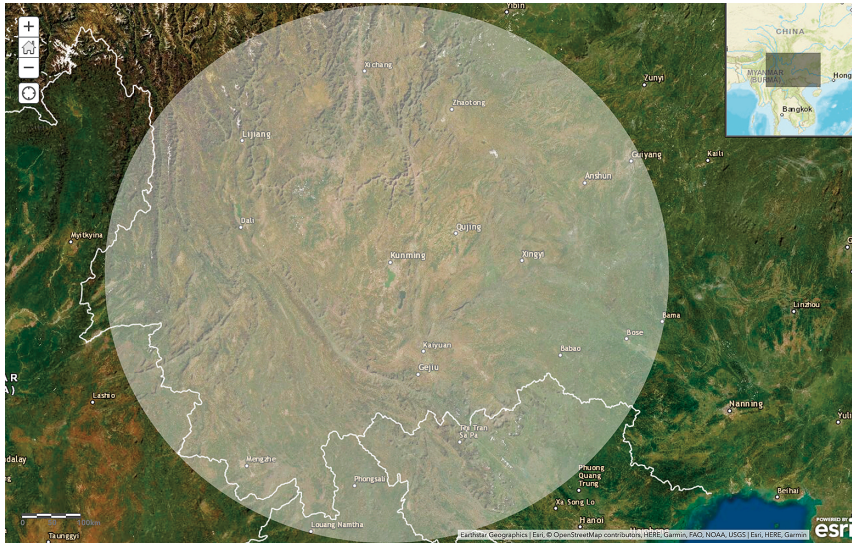
Map 1   The residence area of the Yi ethnic group, indicated by a white shade

Map 2   The Yi dialects in China,[4] the original map from Nishida (1979: 182)

---

[4] The dialectal classification was translated into English and then added to the original map of Nishida (1979) by the author. Needless to say, any errors and inadequacies are entirely my responsibility.

1.2 Previous studies on negation in the Yi languages

In previous studies of the Yi languages, basic structures in negation have been described, but intensive studies have scarcely been conducted. The main studies where negation is described are as follows, and the dialectal classifications in parentheses are according to the official classification in China.

1.2.1 Negation in the Northern dialect

- Negation in Nuosu Yi (Northern dialect), described by Chen and Wu (1998: 136–139)[5]

  According to Chen and Wu (1998), negation is mentioned in the mood category. A negative word [a^{21}] is described as an affix, which functions as a prefix before a monosyllabic verb root, and as an infix in a disyllabic one. In the case of a verb root with more than three syllables, the word [a^{21}] is inserted in the penultimate syllable.

  Prohibition is expressed by the word [tha^{55}] whose behaviour is the same as the negative word [a^{21}], that is, it appears before a monosyllabic verb root, just as a prefix, or between two syllables in a disyllabic verb root, as an infix. Then, in the case of a verb root with more than three syllables, the word [tha^{55}] is placed in the penultimate syllable.

- Negation in Nuosu Yi (Northern dialect), described by Gerner (2013: 403)

  The description of negation by Gerner (2013) is as follows:

  In Nuosu, the negation particle ap 'not' is used in declarative and interrogative clauses, and the particle tat 'do not' in imperative clauses.[6]

- Referred to *Dian Chuan Qian Gui Yi-Han Jiben Cihui Duizhao Cidian* (《滇川黔桂彝漢基本詞彙對照詞典》, *Yunnan Sichuan Guizhou and Guangxi Chinese-Yi Dictionary of contrastive basic vocabulary*) by Zhongyang Minyuan Yizu Lishi Wenxian Ban (1984: 263), there are [ma^{21}] and [a^{21}][7] for a negative word 'not'.

1.2.2 Negation in the Western dialect

- Negation in Lalo Yi (Western dialect), described by Björverud (1998: 71)

  The description of negation by Björverud is cited below:

  Lalo has two negative adverbs (NEG); mà 'not' and thà 'don't', which constitute a separate subclass of adverbs. They must always immediately precede the predicative they negate, i.e.; no other word may intervene between the negative adverb and the predicative.

---

[5] This summary was translated from Chinese into English by the author. Any errors and infelicities that remain are solely mine.

[6] The negative particles are respectively pronounced as follows: *'ap'* is [a^{21}], *'tat'* is [tha^{55}].

[7] In this resource, the tones are indicated by tone letters, but in this paper, all the tones are indicated by Chao's tone numerals as a matter of convenience.

1.2.3   Negation in the Eastern dialect

- Negation in Panxian Yi (Eastern dialect), described by Liu (2009: 112, 135–136, 138)

    In the description by Liu (2009), negation is categorised into adverbs. There are two words for negation, namely, [ma^{21}] 'not' and [ta^{33}] 'do not'. Both are placed before an adjective or a verb, although the prohibitive word [ta^{33}] is placed between two syllables, in cases where a disyllabic adjective is negated.

- There is also a negative word [ɑ^{33}] recorded in Wu and Ji (2011: 50), with several Yi characters used to express it.

1.2.4   Negation in the Central dialect

- Negation in Hlersu language (Central dialect), described by Xu et al. (2013: 178–179, 186–189, 203, 208–209)

    According to Xu et al. (2013), there are two negative adverbs, [ma^{21}] 'not' and [tha^{21}] 'do not' in Hlersu language, or 山蘇彝語. Both are simply placed before an adjective or verb, irrespective of the number of syllables.

1.2.5   Negation in the Southern dialect

- Negation in Southern Yi, described by Li (1996: 78, 86, 118–119)

    Li (1996) classifies negative words, [mɑ^{21}] 'not' and [thɑ^{21}][8] 'do not', as adverbs. In his description, both precede an adjective or verb.

1.2.6   Negation in the Southeastern dialect

- Negation in Axi Yi (Southeastern dialect), described by Liétard (1909: 295, 308–310, 313; 1911: 2; 1912: 26)

    As stated by Liétard (1909), in Axi Yi there are negative words *a⁴* 'not' and *t'a²* 'do not'.[9]

    When an adjective consists of one word, the negative word *a⁴* precedes it, whereas an adjective consists of more than two words, a phrase *a⁴ ngè³* 'not to be' or *a⁴ yé³* 'not to seem', follows the adjective and negates it.

    When a monosyllabic verb is negated, the negative word *a⁴* precedes it. When a verb is disyllabic, the negative word *a⁴* is inserted between these two syllables.

    Prohibition is expressed by another negative word *t'a²* preceding a verb.

- Negation in Axi Yi (Southeastern dialect), described by Yuan (1953: 20)

    According to Yuan (1953), a negative word [a^{21}][10] is added before a predicate.

---

[8] In Li's description, [thɑ^{21}] was originally written as *t'a²¹*. However, in the present paper, aspiration is uniformly notated [h], as a matter of convenience.

[9] The apostrophe of the word *t'a²* indicates aspiration in Liétard's description.

[10] In this resource, the tones are indicated by tone letters, but in this paper, all the tones are indicated by Chao's

- Negation in Axi Yi (Southeastern dialect), described by Wu et al. (2014: 82, 84–85, 131)

  Wu et al. (2014) categorise a negative word [ʌ²¹]¹¹ as an adverb like other scholars in China, and they mention that it is placed just before a monosyllabic verb or adjective, or in the penultimate syllable when a verb or adjective is polysyllabic.

- Negation in Sani Yi (Southeastern dialect), described by Vial (1909: 41, 51–52)

  According to Vial (1909), there are negative words *mà* 'not' and *t'á* 'do not', and they are placed before a verb.

- Negation in Sani Yi (Southeastern dialect), described by Ma (1951: 142–144)

  Ma (1951) states that there are negative words *ma¹¹* 'not' and *t'a¹¹* 'do not'. They are positioned before a monosyllabic predicate, while in the penultimate syllable when a predicate is polysyllabic.

  However, Ma mentions an exception, the case of some compound verbs that exclusively indicate movement or direction of motion, so-called '趨向動詞' in Chinese. When this type of verb is used, both negative words are not put in the penultimate syllable but precede such a verb. The following are examples from Ma (1951: 143):

  ŋɑ³³   mɑ²¹   tɑ³³ lɪ³³
  1SG   NEG   stand up/get up

  'I do not stand up/get up.'

  ŋ̩³³   lɤ²²   thɑ¹¹   gɯ²² lɪ³³
  2SG   get into   PROH   come in/enter

  'Don't come in.'

- In *Yi-Han Jianming Cidian* (《彝漢簡明詞典》, *Yi-Han Concise Dictionary*) by Yunnan-sheng Lunan Yizu Zizhixian Wenshi Yanjiushi (1984)

  There are negative words [mɐ²¹] 'not', [ʌ²¹]¹² 'not', which is used in such a phrase [ʌ²¹ bu³³] 'not to have' as heard in Children's talk, and [thɐ²¹] 'do not', in this dictionary.

---

tone numerals as a matter of convenience.

¹¹ This vowel is written as *'A'* in Wu et al. (2014). According to their vowel chart (2014: 10), it seems to be close to [ɑ]. However, in this work it is written as [ʌ], similar to its original notation *'A'* to some extent.

¹² This vowel is written like *'A'* in this dictionary, and its actual phonetic value is unclear. In this paper, it is provisionally signified by [ʌ].

In this dictionary, although the tones are indicated by tone letters, in this paper, all the tones are indicated by Chao's tone numerals as a matter of convenience.

In addition to the descriptions of Sani Yi above, the author's data also demonstrate basic patterns of negation in Sani Yi, negative particles [mα^{21}] 'not' and [thα^{21}] 'do not'. Both of them precede a monosyllabic verb or adjective, whereas they are always placed in the penultimate syllable just like an infix when a verb or adjective is polysyllabic. For example,[13]

ŋα^{33} z$\underline{i}^{21}$ ŋ̩^{33} k$\mrm{u}^{55}$
1SG   sleep

'I (will) sleep.'

ŋα^{33} z$\underline{i}^{21}$ ŋ̩^{33} <mα^{21}> k$\mrm{u}^{55}$
1SG   sleep   <NEG>

'I will not sleep.'

z$\underline{i}^{21}$ ŋ̩^{33} <thα^{21}> k$\mrm{u}^{55}$
sleep   <PROH>

'Don't sleep.'

To sum up this section briefly, three notable features have been found:
- The negative words in Yi languages always precede a verb[14] or adjective.
- No word can intervene between negative words and the predicative.
- It is plausible that both negative and prohibitive words function as a prefix or infix, at least in Sani and Nuosu Yi.

1.3   Negation and their Etymologies in the Yi languages

As seen above, there are two groups for negative words, based on their phonetic values 'ma' or 'a' respectively, and one group for prohibitive words among Yi languages:
  - Negative words: MA group and A group
  - Prohibitive words: THA group
  According to STEDT,[15]
  "In many languages there is an allegro variant with zero-initial, e.g. Lahu **mâ~â**.*"*
Hence, it is most probable that both the MA and A groups in Yi languages would originate in PTB *ma (NEGATIVE).

---

[13] In this paper, any example sentences without notes are cited from the author's own data.

[14] Having thoroughly observed the data referred to for this paper, auxiliary verbs are also dealt with in the same way; in other words, the negative words also precede auxiliary verbs in the Yi languages.

[15] https://stedt.berkeley.edu/~stedt-cgi/rootcanal.pl/etymon/2436 (last access on 10th November 2020.)

The etymon for THA group, including such words introduced above as [tha^{55}], [thɑ^{21}], or [t ɑ^{33}], is PTB *(t/d)a PROHIBITIVE (NEG. IMPERATIVE), as shown in STEDT.[16]

1.4 Chart of Negation types in the Yi languages

Here is a chart showing negative words and negation patterns of each dialect.

Subdialects are indicated in parentheses, if needed.

The asterisk indicates a relatively minor type within a dialect.

The type 'MA+A' denotes that negative words of both MA and A groups co-occur within a dialect or subdialect.

The hyphen indicates that no such phenomenon is described in the resources. Nevertheless, the same patterns as shown in this chart may exist in other dialects or subdialects, if we have more data on them. Further data and investigation will be unquestionably required.

Table 1 Negation types in the Yi languages

	Northern	Western	Eastern	Central	Southern	Southeastern
MA	*+	+	+	+	+	+ (Sani)
A	+	−	*+ (Dafang)	−	−	+ (Axi)
MA+A	*+	−	*+ (Dafang)	−	−	*+ (Sani)
NEG+V/A	+monosyllabic words	+	+	+	+	+ monosyllabic words
infixal NEG	+disyllabic words	−	−	−	−	+disyllabic words
NEG in penultimate syllable	+Polysyllabic words	−	−	−	−	+Polysyllabic words
THA	+	+	+	+	+	+
TA	−	−	*+ (Panxian)	−	−	−
PROH+V(/A)	+	+	+	+	+	+
Infixal PROH	+disyllabic words	−	+	−	−	+ disyllabic words (Sani)
PROH in penultimate syllable	+Polysyllabic words	−	−	−	−	+Polysyllabic words (Sani)

---

[16] The same as shown in footnote 13.

Interestingly, of all Yi languages used within China, the northernmost Nuosu Yi and the second southernmost Sani Yi display such similar patterns in the negation structure depending on the number of syllables, despite of their long distance.

Furthermore, according to Bradley (2002), Nuosu Yi is classified as Northern Loloish, while Sani Yi as Central Loloish, yet both of them bear such a strong similarity in the negation structure, beyond dialectal difference.

An important future task is to clarify the reason for these intriguing features shared among them.

2. Maps of Yi characters denoting negation and their geolinguistic analysis

In this section, maps of Yi characters used for expressing negation and prohibition will be demonstrated. These maps will enable us to examine clearly not only the distribution of the Yi characters but also the difference in their forms and the interrelation among the Yi languages.

2.1 Map of the Yi characters expressing 'not' and its analysis
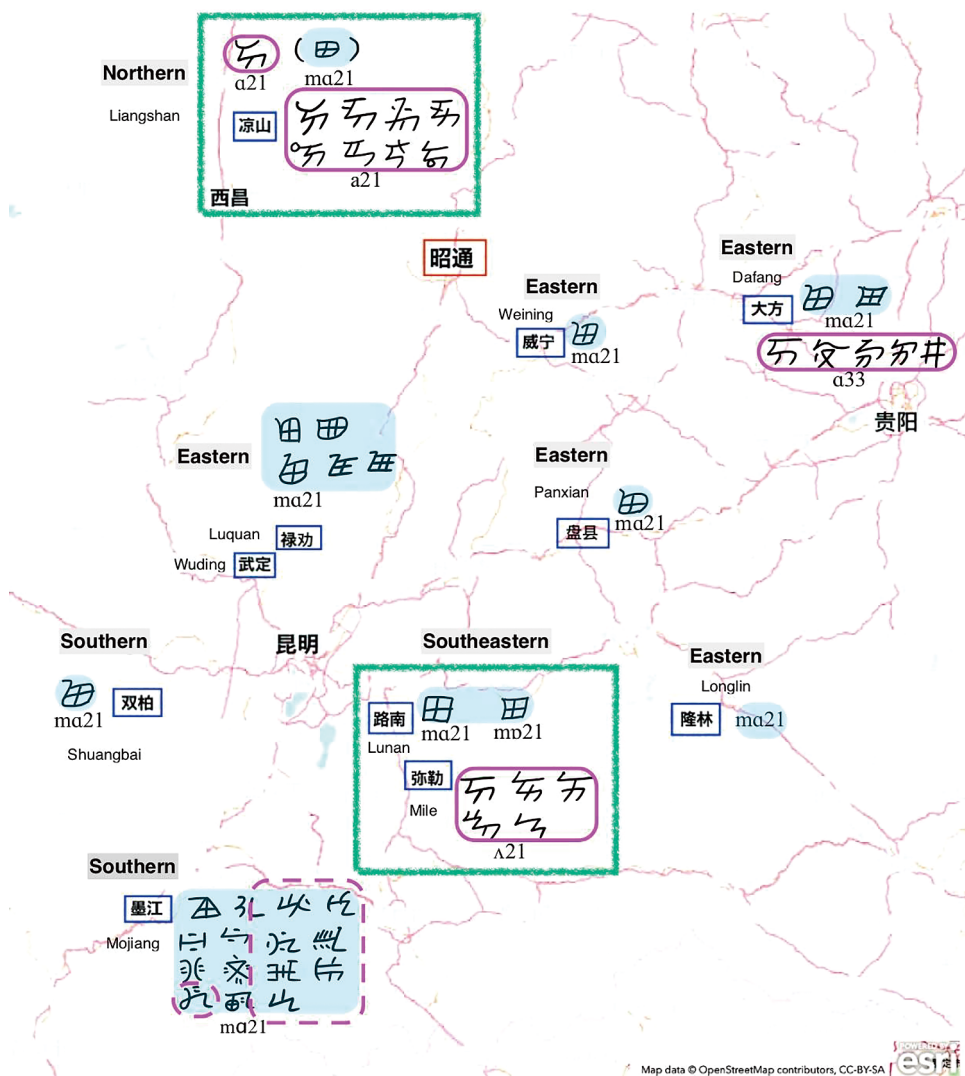
Map 3   Map of Yi characters expressing 'not'

In this map,[17] the MA group in 1.3 is indicated by light-blue shades, whereas the A group is indicated by pink circles. The pink broken lines suggest that some of the characters of the MA group, in fact only in Mojiang, the southmost area on the map, bear a strong resemblance to those of the A group. The green crayonish squares show whether negative words are infixal when they negate a polysyllabic verb or adjective. Apparently, there is a big difference between the MA and A groups, in terms of character shapes.

The characters of the A group are observed in peripheral areas on the map. In the A group, one typical character '芍' and some other strongly similar characters are found in all the regions. Hence, it is plausible to think that such characters might have the same origin and undergone changes for ages in each region, and there are consequently many allographs.

In the MA group, most characters resemble the Chinese character 田 'field, farmland' more or less, and share a notably high uniformity and similarity with each other. It is highly probable that they would have originated from one "proto-character".

However, in Mojiang area, there exist characters that are notably similar to those of the A group, although they are pronounced [mɑ²¹] all the same. This may imply that all the characters used for negation 'not' were logographic and their pronunciations have varied solely by dialect or contexts. In reality, in Sani Yi's case, *pimos*, religious leaders among Sani people in the Yi ethnic group pronounce certain characters in different ways based on contexts. Therefore, it is unsurprising that in Mojiang area characters belonging to both groups are read [mɑ²¹] irrespective of their shapes.

Another possibility is that within the Yi languages the negative words might have been pronounced either as *a or *ma quite freely at a certain ancient stage; then, in each region their pronunciation would have gradually shifted into either the MA or A group. Then, in parallel with this phonological change, the phoneticisation of Yi characters might have progressed. It is still highly probable that the characters of both the MA and A groups would have been used mainly for negation, because they are observed in such a vast area and have maintained their fixed meaning of negation, although the possibility of phonetic loan cannot be ignored. As seen in Liangshan and Dafang, the fact that characters belonging to each group are strictly distinguished may be evidence for this divergence throughout history.

---

[17] The first Yi-character map of the negative word 'not' is seen in Iwasa (2019: 19); it comes together with a brief note.

2.2   Map of Yi characters expressing 'do not' and its analysis

Here is a map of Yi characters denoting prohibition 'do not'.
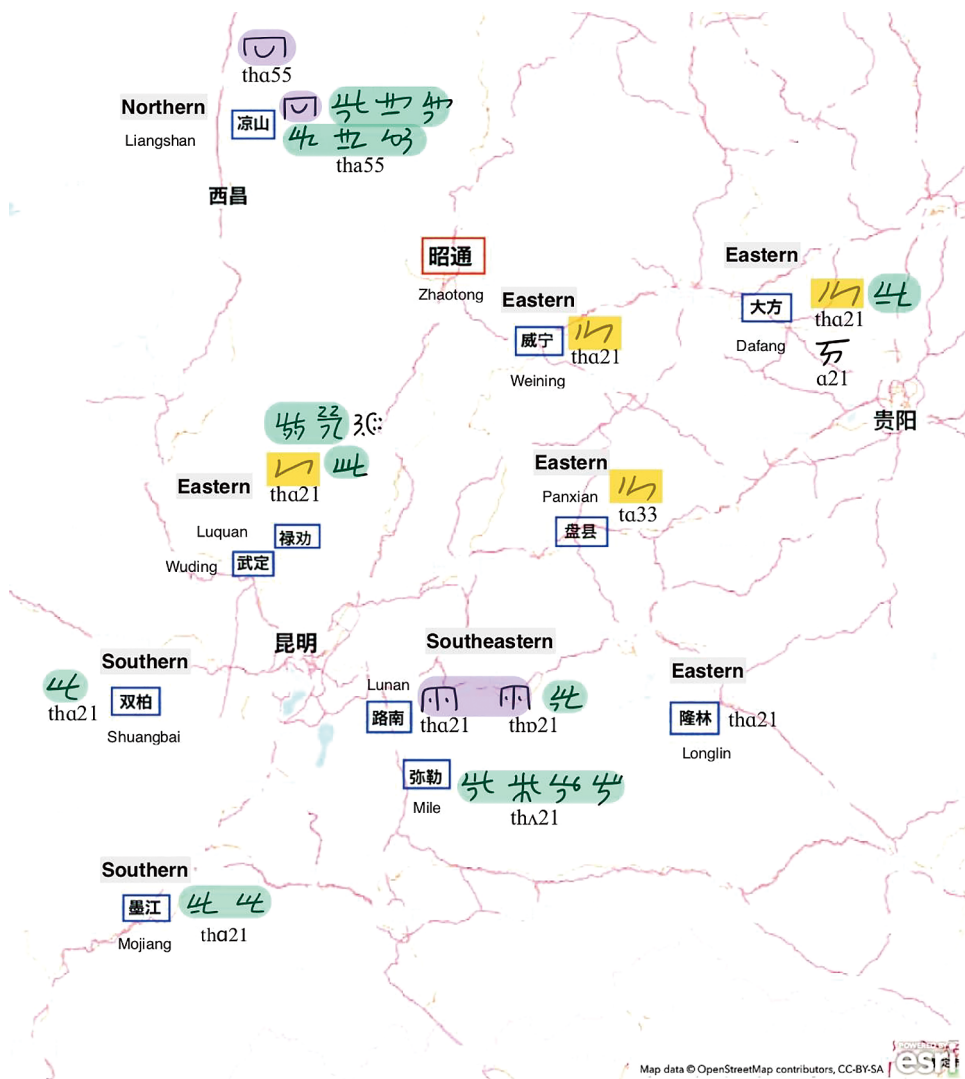
Map 4   Map of Yi characters expressing 'do not'

As observed on the map above, there are three groups of Yi characters expressing prohibition. Judging from a resemblance in the shape of all the characters on the map, the characters shaded green seem to constitute one group, that is, Group 1. All the characters of this group are distributed in peripheral but the vastest areas of all the groups.

Group 2 is marked by yellow shades and found in Eastern dialect areas, mainly around Guizhou. All the characters of this group are examples of phonetic loan, *Jiajie* (假借). They are normally used to denote 'one', and they have the identical phonetic value to that of the prohibitive words in these areas.

Group 3 is demonstrated by lavender shades and found in Lunan of the Southeastern dialect area and in Liangshan of the Northern dialect area. Despite the geographical and dialectal distance, very similar characters are observed. There are no data as for Liangshan, however, and it is highly probable that these characters are a case of phonetic loan, at least in Lunan. These characters usually express 'time, when' in Sani Yi.

## 3.   Negation in Sani Yi

3.1   Brief introduction and the author's fieldwork data of Sani Yi

As mentioned above, according to the official classification in China, Sani Yi belongs to the Southeastern dialect, whereas Sani Yi and the other Southeastern group of Loloish dialects are placed as one language of Central Loloish by Bradley (2002).

Sani Yi is spoken around Shilin Yi Autonomous County, Yiliang prefecture and Mile prefecture in Yunnan Province.

Sani Yi possesses the script and numerous manuscripts written in it. Generally speaking, Sani Yi is greatly influenced by the Chinese language.

The author has been conducting fieldwork on Sani Yi as well as studying its manuscripts for years. The fieldwork is usually carried out in Wukeshu (五棵樹) village, Shilin Yi Autonomous County, Yunnan, China, around the whitish shaded area, shown on Map 5 below.
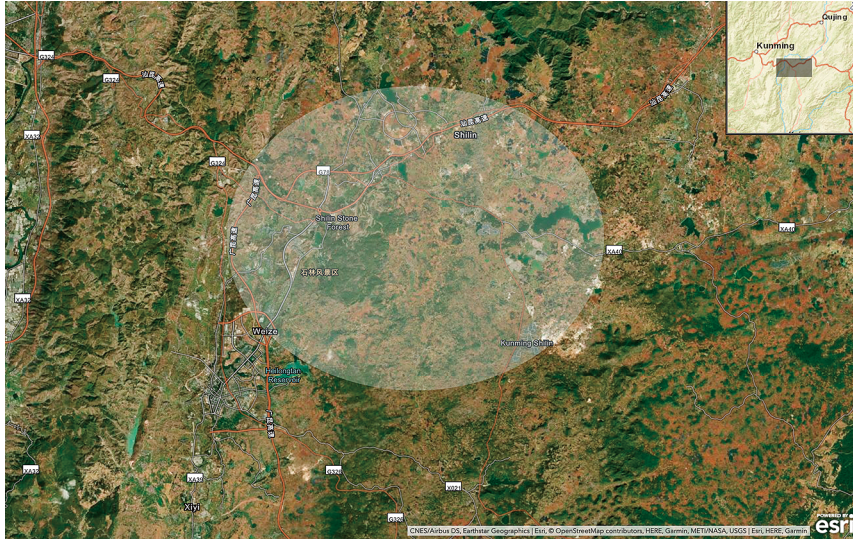
Map 5   Shilin

Map 6   Wukeshu Village

Main consultant:[18] A woman in her 60's. Born and raised in Wukeshu village. Good command of Sani Yi, Southwestern dialect of Mandarin, and Mandarin Chinese.

---

[18] My consultant's relatives are also willing to help me describe Sani Yi all the time, as do other villagers. Here, I would like to express my gratitude for their cooperation and long-term friendship.

Fieldwork and the measures to collect linguistic data: the data collected while on-site research in China almost every year as well as enquiry from Japan by video-talk, whenever necessary.

3.2 Basic structure and features of negation in Sani Yi

As observed in 1.2.6, there are three negative particles, [mɑ²¹] 'not', [thɑ²¹] 'do not', and [ʌ²¹] in Sani Yi. From here, [ʌ²¹] will not be mentioned, because it appears in very limited phrases such as [ʌ²¹ bu³³] 'not to have' in Children's talk.

On the one hand, the negative particles [mɑ²¹] and [thɑ²¹] precede a verb, adjective, or auxiliary verb, when it is monosyllabic, and no other words can intervene between them. On the other hand, when they negate a polysyllabic word, they are always placed in the penultimate syllable, although there exist some exceptional verbs[19] that especially indicate movement or direction as described by Ma (1951: 143). In this section, the negative particles [mɑ²¹] and [thɑ²¹] are described as affixes based on their function and behaviour in verbal structures, but of course, more investigation is needed, though.

(1) khi³³   bi³³   lɑ³³   tʂɑ³³
    that   pen   CL   good

    'That pen is good.'

(2) khi³³   bi³³   lɑ³³   mɑ²¹-tʂɑ³³
    that   pen   CL   NEG-good

    'That pen is not good.'

(3) ŋɑ³³   tsɑ³³   dzɑ²¹   xɑ³³
    1SG   food   eat   PRF

    'I have eaten food.'

(4) ni³³   tsɑ³³   dzɑ²¹   xɑ³³   xɑ³³
    2SG   food   eat   PRF   PRF

    'Have you eaten food?'

(5) ŋɑ³³   tsɑ³³   mɑ²¹   dzɑ²¹   se²¹
    1SG   food   NEG   eat   yet, still

    'I have not eaten food yet.'

---

[19] See 1.2.6 for more details.

(6) thɑ²¹- be³³
     PROH – speak

     'Don't speak.'

(7) ŋɑ³³   z̠i̠²¹ ni³³ kɯ⁵⁵
     1SG   sleep

     'I will sleep.'

(8) ni³³   z̠i̠²¹ ni³³ kɯ⁵⁵ kɯ⁵⁵
     2SG   sleep~ALT

     'Do you go to bed?'

(9) ŋɑ³³   z̠i̠²¹ ni³³ <mɑ²¹> kɯ⁵⁵
     1SG   sleep   <NEG>

     'I will not/do not sleep.'

(10) z̠i̠²¹ ni³³ <thɑ²¹> kɯ⁵⁵
     sleep<PROH>

     'Don't sleep.'

It is noteworthy that tense is neutralised in negative sentences in Sani Yi.

(11) ŋɑ³³   dʐi̠³³
     1SG   go

     'I (will) go.'

(12) ŋɑ³³   dʐi̠³³   xɑ³³
     1SG   go   PRF

     'I went/have gone.'

(13) ŋɑ³³   mɑ²¹   dʐi̠³³
     1SG   NEG   go

     'I will not/do not go.' or 'I have not gone/I did not go.'

(14) ŋɑ³³   mɑ²¹   dzi̠³³   xɑ³³
    1SG   NEG   go   PRF

'I stop going < I (decide) not to go.'

Here are some examples of negation in complex sentences.

(15) ŋɑ³³   i³³ tɑ³³   tʂo³³   (ɣ)ɑ³³ ²⁰   li̠⁴⁴   se³³
    1SG   here   stay   COMP   like   still

'I still want to stay here.'

(16) * ŋɑ³³   i³³ tɑ³³   tʂo³³   (ɣ)ɑ³³   mɑ²¹   li̠⁴⁴   se³³
      1SG   here.   stay   COMP   NEG   like   still

Sentence (16) is unacceptable to native speakers of Sani Yi.
Instead, they normally say as follows:

(17) ŋɑ³³   i³³ tɑ³³   mɑ²¹   tʂo³³   lɑ⁵⁵
    1SG   here   NEG   stay   PRF

'I do not stay here.'

This sentence implies 'I do not want to stay here anymore', and it is the simplest and the most frequently used expression in this situation. There is another expression with the same meaning, as shown below:

(18) ŋɑ³³   ɕã⁵⁵   (lɑ⁵⁵)   i³³ tɑ³³   mɑ²¹   tʂo³³   lɑ⁵⁵
    1SG   think   (PRF²¹)   here   NEG   stay   PRF

In this case, the word order is not Sani Yi-like but Chinese-like. This might be related to the verb [ɕã⁵⁵], which is a loan word from Chinese, and its pronunciation is probably from Yunnan dialect of Mandarin, '想 [ɕiã⁵³]',²² and its syntactic structure might also have been borrowed. Nevertheless, further investigation is still required, because this type of inversion seems not to be very surprising and is actually observed amongst SOV languages.

---

[20] The initial consonant [ɣ] is hardly pronounced in my informant's speech.

[21] This particle is arbitrary.

[22] This is based on the pronunciation of my informant.

3.3 Influence from Chinese: Morpho-syntactic change in negative forms

In Sani Yi, several loan words from Chinese have been morpho-syntactically changed.

(19) tɕiɛ̃⁵⁵ tɑ̃³³
     easy

     'easy' < Yunnan dialect of Mandarin '簡單 [tɕiɛ̃⁵³ tã⁴⁴]'[23]

(20) tɕiɛ̃⁵⁵ <mɑ²¹> tɑ̃³³
     easy   <NEG>

     'not easy'

(21) li⁵⁵ χɛ⁵⁵
     terrible, awesome

     'terrible, awesome' < Yunnan dialect of Mandarin '厲害 [li²¹² xɛ²¹²]'[24]

(22) li⁵⁵   <mɑ²¹> χɛ⁵⁵
     terrible <NEG>

     'not terrible'

Chinese language has had a huge influence on Sani Yi throughout history. Consequently, it contains countless loan words, many of which have already taken strong root in Sani people's daily lives. This morpho-syntactic phenomenon also demonstrates convincingly that Chinese language has exerted a deep sway over Sani Yi for a long time.

4. Final remarks and future tasks

This paper is the very first step in describing negation in the Yi languages. Although it is not yet sufficient to clarify a comprehensive view of negation in them, several important features have been introduced here. In particular, the features shared with Nuosu and Sani Yi are worthy of attention and further investigation.

The next step, as one of my future tasks, is to collect more data on negative expressions, restrictions on negation, and negation in serial verb constructions and to conduct intensively focused research in this area. Simultaneously, more data on other Yi languages will also be collected and analysed. A study of negation in the Yi languages will be profitable not only to Tibeto-Burman linguistics but also to general linguistics.

---

[23] This is based on the pronunciation of my informant.

[24] This is based on the pronunciation of my informant.

Abbreviations

1SG	1st person singular	COMP	Complementiser
2SG	2nd person singular	NEG	Negation
ALT	Alternative question	PRF	Perfect
CL	Classifier	PROH	Prohibitive

References

[**English & French**]

Björverud, Susanna
    1998   *A Grammar of Lalo*. Lund: Department of East Asian Languages, Lund University.

Bradley, David
    2002   The subgrouping of Tibeto-Burman. In Christopher Beckwith (ed.) *Medieval Tibeto-Burman Languages.* Leiden: Brill. 73–112.

Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee
    2010   *The 2009 Vietnam Population and Housing Census.* Hanoi.

Gerner, Matthias
    2013   *A Grammar of Nuosu*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Iwasa Kazue（岩佐一枝）
    2019   *Remarks on Maps of the Yi script Based on the Swadesh 100 Wordlist.* Studies in Asian Geolinguistics, Monograph Series No.5. ILCAA 2015–2017 Joint Research Project Studies in Asian Geolinguistics. Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

Liétard, Alfred
    1909   Notions de grammaire lo-lo (dialecte a-hi). *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient.* 9. 285–314.
    1911   Essai de Dictionnaire Lo-lo-Français, dialecte *A-hi. T'oung Pao.* Vol. 7. Leiden: Brill. 1–37, 123–156, 316–346, 544–558.
    1912   Vocabulaire Français-Lo-lo, dialecte *A-hi. T'oung Pao.* Vol. 8. Leiden: Brill. 1–42.

Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment
    2015   *Results of Population and Housing Census 2015*: Vientiane.

Vial, Paul
    1909   *Dictionnaire Français-Lolo dialecte gni.* Hong Kong: Imprimerie de la Société des Missions-Etrangères.

[**Chinese**]

白 显云（Bai, Xianyun）主编
    1995   《彝汉字典》昆明：云南民族出版社.

陈 康（Chen, Kang）、巫 达（Wu, Da）
    1998   《彝语语法（诺苏话）》北京：中央民族大学出版社.

滇川黔桂彝文协作组（Dian Chuan Qian Gui Yiwen xiezuo zu）编
    2004   《滇川黔桂彝文字集》贵州民族出版社. 四川民族出版社. 云南民族出版社.

李 生福（Li, Shengfu）

    1996 　《彝语南部方言研究》北京：民族出版社.

李 增华（Li, Zenghua）主编

    2014 　《古彝文常用字典》昆明：云南民族出版社.

柳 远超（Liu, Yuanchao）

    2009 　《盘县次方言彝语》北京：民族出版社.

马 学良（Ma, Xueliang）

    1951 　《撒尼彝语研究》语言学专刊　第 2 种. 上海：商务书院馆.

普 梅丽（Pu, Meili），张 辉（Zhang, Hui），普 梅笑（Pu, Meixiao）编著

         《云南规范彝文彝汉词典》昆明：云南民族出版社.

普 璋开（Pu, Zhangkai）

    2005 　《滇南彝文字典》昆明：云南民族出版社.

武 自立（Wu, Zili）、纪 嘉发（Ji, Jiafa）

    2011 　《汉彝简明词典》成都：四川民族出版社.

武 自立（Wu, Zili）、张 国富（Zhang, Guofu）、张 伟（Zhang, Wei）

    2014 　《阿细彝语概要》昆明：云南民族出版社.

许 鲜明（Xu, Xianming）、白 碧波（Bai, Bibo）等

    2013 　《山苏彝语研究》北京：民族出版社.

袁 家骅（Yuan, Jiahua）

    1953 　《阿细民歌及其语言》语言学专刊　第 5 种. 北京：中国科学院出版社.

云南省路南彝族自治县文史研究室（Yunnansheng Lunan Yizu Zizhixian Wenshi Yanjiushi）编

    1984 　《彝汉简明词典》昆明：云南民族出版社.

张 晋智（Zhang, Puzhi）

    2014 　《简明彝汉字典（禄劝版）》昆明：云南民族出版社.

中央民院彝族历史文献班（Zhongyang Minyuan Yizu Lishi Wenxianban）编

    1984 　《滇川黔桂彝汉基本词汇对照词典》北京：中央民院彝族历史文献编译室.

[Japanese]

西田龍雄（Nishida, Tatsuo）

    1979 　『倮儸譯語の研究』京都：松香堂.

[Website]

STEDT: https://stedt.berkeley.edu/~stedt-cgi/rootcanal.pl