

The current status of Akha

by

Noel Kya Heh

and

Thomas M. Tehan

June 2000

**Payap University Linguistics, Chiang Mai, Thailand
and SIL International**

Payap Research and Development Institute

Abstract

The current status of Akha

Thomas M. Tehan, PhD.

Payap University

Akha is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in southern China, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. This paper gives a short introduction to the Akha people and their language. A history of language development both by the language community itself and those outside is then surveyed. The current resources for language and cultural maintenance is then reviewed.

บทคัดย่อ

สถานภาพด้านภาษาศาสตร์ในปัจจุบันของภาษาอาข่า

ดร.โรทัส เทียน

มหาวิทยาลัยพายัพ

ภาษาอาข่าเป็นภาษาในตระกูล ทิเบโต-เบอร์แมน ใช้พูดในเขตประเทศจีนตอนใต้, พม่า, ลาว และไทย

งานวิจัยฉบับนี้เป็นการแนะนำสั้นๆ เกี่ยวกับชาวอาข่าและภาษาของชาวอาข่า ได้มีการสำรวจประวัติ

เกี่ยวกับพัฒนาการด้านภาษาทั้งจากภายในชุมชนอาข่าเองและจากบุคคลภายนอก พร้อมทั้งมีแหล่งข้อมูล

ปัจจุบันที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการรักษาภาษาและวัฒนธรรมของชาวอาข่า

Table of Contents

1.1 Introduction to Akha.....	1
1.2 A history of language development both by the language community itself and those outside.....	2
1.2.1 Orthographic development.....	2
1.2.2 Phonological descriptions	3
1.2.3 Current orthography description	3
1.2.4 A comparison of orthographies.....	5
1.3 Literature: What is available for language and cultural maintenance at various levels?	10
1.3.1 Stages of literacy materials	10
1.3.2 Foundational Akha literacy material.....	11
1.3.3 Supplementary Akha literacy resources.....	13
1.4 Conclusions: Looking to the future	15
1.4.1 Language endangerment and maintenance	15
1.4.2 Literacy development: materials	15
1.4.3 Literacy development: motivation	16
1.4.4 In closing	16
1.5 References about the Akha, or Hani, and their language	16

Table of tables

<i>Table 1: Akha consonant</i>	4
<i>Table 2: Akha vowels</i>	4
<i>Table 3: A comparison of all the orthographic symbols used to write Akha (Aini) and Hani</i>	6
<i>Table 4: Transcriptions of an Akha/Hani phrase in each orthography</i>	8
<i>Table 5: Stage 1: Basic literacy</i>	9
<i>Table 6: Stage 2: Fluency and expansion of reading skills</i>	9

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr. Dennis Malone and Karen Block for their comments given at earlier stages of this paper. For the shortcomings and errors which remain, we alone are responsible.

Tom Tehan also wishes to thank Payap University for giving him a semester free from teaching duties in order to complete this research.

The current status of Akha

1.1 Introduction to Akha

Akha is a Tibeto-Burman language (Southern Loloish/Yiphoish branch) that is spoken in China, Burma, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.¹ They call themselves 'Akha'. Akha is an SOV language.

The Tai peoples of Shan State, Myanmar, have used the name 'I Kaw' to refer to the Akha, a contemptuous name with a feminine connotation, as some Akha take it, since they are usually neutral in inter-people-group conflicts. This was shortened to 'Kaw', a derogatory name that they are still often called.

Contemporary Akha think that any name with the syllable 'Kaw' is a contemptuous reference to them. A few years ago the Akha cultural committee complained about these negative names, and 'Akha' was adopted as the new official name by the Myanmar government.

Akha is officially called 'Ai Ni', or 'Za Ni', in China and included under the Hani nationality. 'Kha Kaw' is their common name in Laos and Vietnam. The Lahu and the Karen call them 'Taw Kaw'. The Akha have also been referred to by the following names (and spellings of names) in various written materials: Aini, Aka, Ak'a, Ekaw, Ekwa, Ikaw Khao, Ikho, Ikor, Khako, Kha Ko, Ko and Woni.

The homeland of the Akha is China, in Southwest Yunnan (Sixhuanbanna and Lacang prefectures), where the great majority still live (Lewis 1984). Akha also live in Myanmar (Burma), in the eastern part of Keng Tung district of Shan State. Smaller populations of Akha live in Chiangmai, Chiangrai and Mae Hong Son provinces of northern Thailand, extreme northern and northwest Laos (Phongsali and adjacent areas) and northern Vietnam.

It is difficult to estimate the Akha population accurately. Various figures have been proposed for the number of Akha: 130,000 in China (1990); 200,000 in Myanmar (1991); 25,000 in Thailand (1986); 5,000 in Laos; 360,000 total or more (Grimes, 1996). It seems that population between 300,000 and 400,000 total is reasonable, though there is no adequate, comprehensive census data available. The latest Akha self-estimates of population are: Total 1,230,000; Yunnan 700,000, Myanmar 400,000, Thailand 70,000, Laos 60,000, and Vietnam a few thousand. (Akha culture committee from Keng Tung)

¹ An earlier version of this paper with the same title was presented at the 12th World Congress of Applied Linguistics (AILA): The Roles of Language in the 21st Century: Unity and Diversity.

1.2 A history of language development both by the language community itself and those outside

1.2.1 Orthographic development

There is a roman-based script for Akha that the Roman Catholic churches in Shan State use, and at least some Akha there are using this script and reading texts written in this script.

According to Matthew McDaniel,

“Regarding the Akha scripts, before Paul Lewis was born, Catholic Akha script was already there, printed by Msgr. Bonetta from Toungoo Press. And the present Catholic script is the third improvement and already taken into shape before 1950 and done by Fr. Protuluppi. The earliest Akha prayer book was printed somewhere around 1917 already.” (General communication to the Endangered Language List on the Internet)

However, David Bradley wrote: “My information is that the first Akha script was the Protestant one, developed in 1949 and first printed in 1950. The Catholic script was derived from this, and was first developed in the mid-1950s; but hardly used until the mid-1960s.” (General communication to the Endangered Language List on the Internet)

Paul Lewis described his orthographic work in developing what is now called ‘the baptist alphabet’ as follows:

After studying Lahu first and then Akha, I reduced the Akha language to writing in 1950, and began to produce literature. Dr. Frank Laubach, the world-renowned literacy expert, came through Rangoon at that time, so my wife and I took an Akha young man and two Lahu men with us to work with Dr. Laubach in producing Akha and Lahu primers especially designed for adults. Using a pattern Dr. Laubach taught us we also produced readers for new literates for both tribes. (General communication to the Endangered Language List on the Internet)

A Thai alphabet-based version of Akha has also been developed based on the underlying phonological analysis of the baptist script.

David Bradley also describes another orthography, a roman-based pinyin one:

The Chinese Hani script was developed in 1957 and used in a very limited way in the late 1950s; then mainly in abeyance until the early 1980s when it was revised and reintroduced. An Akha version of the Hani script was also developed in the mid-1980s in China, and is now in use in Xishuangbanna, the main Akha area in China, though again in a fairly limited way. Akha are classified as part of the Hani nationality in China. (general communication to the Endangered Language List on the Internet)

Matthew McDaniel has created another orthography over the past couple of years using the Roman script and has just released a collection of folk tales and personal history using this script.

1.2.2 Phonological descriptions

It was actually after or simultaneously with the development of these orthographies that more detailed phonological studies were published. Paul Lewis, Inga-Lill Hansson and David Bradley have published phonological descriptions based on availability of various JEU G'oe dialect speakers.² Katsura studied another dialect he called “Alu”, which probably belongs to the JEU Jaw dialect.

Paul Lewis speaks fluent Akha. His analysis is emically profound, natural and economic. Lewis (1989) isolated 26 consonant phonemes, 13 pure vowels and 3 diphthongs; diphthongs are used for words borrowed into Akha from the Tai dialects. He grouped the syllables into five tones, three oral tones and two laryngealized tones. (These could be analyzed as three oral tones: high, mid and low, and two laryngealized (or creaky) vowels in mid and low tones.)

Inga-Lill Hansson (1989) is a linguistic researcher from Lund University in Sweden. She has proposed 32 initial consonants, some of which Lewis treats as allophones. Hansson lists an aspirated series of stops (which Lewis lists as allophones in complementary distribution with their non-aspirated corresponding consonant) but no glottal stop. She also proposes 13 non-laryngealized vowels, and 13 laryngealized ones (marked with a ‘q’); however she has no diphthongs. Her description has the same tonal analysis as Lewis. David Bradley’s analysis is very similar to that of Hansson’s; Bradley is on the Linguistics faculty at LaTrobe University, Australia.

Makio Katsura (1966) analyzed an ‘Alu’ dialect (which seems to be closely related to the JEU Jaw dialect) as spoken in a village in Chiangrai, Thailand. He has fewer phonemes in all three categories: consonants, vowels and tones. His consonant system resembles Lewis’s and Hansson’s, although he does not list the labialized phonemes /py/, /by/ and /my/. His vowel system is similar to but smaller than the other systems because it lacks the two front-rounded vowels /oi/ and /oe/. His tone system differs significantly; it is not complete in that it has two contour tones and no consideration of register / laryngealization.

1.2.3 Current orthography description

As stated before, Akha has been written in various scripts, including Roman and simplified Thai. All of the Roman based scripts seem to follow the convention of placing a space between each syllable; thus, a multisyllabic word will have several spaces within it. The titles of some books violate this spacing rule.

² For a detailed analysis and comparison of these various phonological descriptions, see Noel Kya Heh, 1999. A summary paper on readings in Shan State languages with a focus on Akha. An unpublished research paper for the Linguistics Department at Payap University. 19 pages)

The New Testament was printed in the Roman-based baptist script in 1968, and a Thai script version was released in the early 1980s. Both scripts are available for use on computers as True Type Fonts. There is also a combination Akha and Lahu Roman font available for computers.

The most widespread script is the roman-based script that Paul Lewis designed a while ago. It is commonly referred to as the Baptist script. Akha (Protestant, Roman Catholic and non-Christian) in both Shan State and Thailand use this script for written communication, and several books and booklets have been published using this script.

The script uses symbols as in Table 1.

The consonant symbols arranged from bilabial through glottal are:

Labial	Labialized Palatal	Alveolar	Alveolar-Palatal	Palatal	Velar	Post-Velar	Glottal
p	py	t	ts	c	k	k'	(?)
b	by	d	dz	j	g	g'	
		s		sh			h
		z					
m	my	n		ny	ng		
		l		y			

Table 1: Akha consonants

Actually the [ʔ] is not found in any alphabet as it is predicatable depending on vowel onset and tones. The apostrophe following /k/ and /g/ means it is a post-velar stop (that is said farther back in the mouth than the velar /k/ and /g/). The phonemes /py/, /by/ and /my/ are labialized (if you try to pronounce these as if the /y/ is a consonant, you will have roughly the correct sound). The /y/ symbol is used for the voiced palatal fricative that is present also in the middle of English word ‘measure’. The /j/ symbol is the palatal glide that begins the English word ‘yellow’.

The Baptist script distinguishes 13 vowels. Arranged high to low (up and down on the chart) and front to back (left-to-right on the chart) in the oral cavity, as in Table 2.

Front		Mid	Back	
unrnd	round		round	unrnd
i	oi		u	ui
e	oe	eu	o	aw
eh			a	
m			ah	

Table 2: Akha vowels

Note that Akha has rounded front and unrounded back vowels. These ‘unusual’ vowel symbols are noted also as rounded front (/oi/ and /oe/) and unrounded back (/ui/ and /aw/). The phoneme /ah/ is always a nasalized vowel. The phoneme /m/ is a syllabic nasal; there is also a consonant /m/ written with the same symbol. Context allows the determination of which /m/ is meant. The phonemes /eu/ is a schwa, like the vowel in the English word ‘but’. The syllable structure is CV (consonant vowel) with a tone assigned.

There are three diphthongs (vowels with two sounds) that are used in words borrowed into Akha: ai, ao, am.

Tones are the most diverse in analysis apparently. The Baptist script has three oral tones: high, mid and low. It also has two laryngealized (or creaky) vowels in mid and low tones. Altogether, that makes for a five-way distinction. The mid oral tone is unmarked. The other four are indicated by greater than (>) and less than (<) signs turned either up or down, and placed following each syllable. This provides a unique representation of each possible combination of tone and register.

A word/syllable in Akha has the structure: CVT, i.e. Consonant Vowel Tone. There are also clitics with the structure VT. They are written -VT and are appended to words, e.g. mui-eh. (Lewis 1989:13)

1.2.4 A comparison of orthographies

Several orthographies have been employed to write Akha. A table comparing all the orthographic symbols used to write Akha (Aini) and Hani follows in Table 3, which follows on the next three pages.

1. IPA (for reference).
2. Baptist (Paul Lewis) orthography (Roman-based): used in Thailand and Myanmar for the Akha language.
3. OMF orthography (Roman-based): used in Thailand for the Akha language; very similar to Baptist orthography.
4. New (1985) Roman Catholic orthography (Roman-based): used in Myanmar for the Akha language; more similar to the Baptist script.
5. Old (pre-1985) Roman Catholic orthography (Roman-based): used in Myanmar for the Akha language
6. SEAMP (Leo Alting) orthography (Roman-based): used in Thailand for the Akha language.
7. China Hani (Pin-yin) orthography (Roman-based): used in China for the Hani language.
8. China Aini (Pin-yin) orthography (Roman-based): used in China for the Aini (Akha) language.
9. Matthew McDonald orthography (Roman-based): used in Thailand for the Akha language.

10. OMF Thai-based orthography: Thai letters used in Thailand for the Akha language.
11. Burmese based orthography: used in Myanmar for the Akha language.

	IPA	Bapt	OMF Rom.	Cath New 1985	Cath Old 1984	Seamp (Leo)	Pinyn Hani	Pinyn Aini	McD	OMF Thai	Bur
vcl. bil. asp. stop	p ^h			ph	ph				p	พ	๓
vcl. bil. stop	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	bp	ป	๐
vd. bil. stop	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	บ	๑,๒
vd. bil. nasal	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	ม	๔
vcl. bil. palatalized asp. stop	p ^{jh}			phy	phy phl					พย	๕
vcl. bil. palatalized stop	p ^j	py	py	py	py pl	py	pi	pi	py	ปย	๖
vd. bil. palatalized stop	b ^j	by	by	by	by bl	by	bi	bi	by	บย	๗,๘
vd. bil. palatalized nasal	m ^j	my	my	my	my ml	my	mi	mi	my	มย	๙
vcl. alv. asp. stop	t ^h			th	th				t	ท	๑๐
vcl. alv. stop	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	dt	ต	๑๑
vd. alv. stop	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	ด	๑๒,๑๓
vd. alv. nasal	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	น	๑๔
vcl. post-alv. asp. affricate	tʃ ^h			ch	ch				ch	ช	๑๕
vcl. post-alv. affricate	tʃ	c	c	c, cy	c, cy	ch	c	c	chj	จ	๑๖
vd. post-alv. affricate	dʒ	j	j	j, jy	j, jy	j	j	j	j, jy	ฉ	๑๗
vd. palatal nasal	ɲ	ny	ny	ny	gn	ny	ni	ni	ny	ฌ	๑๘
vcl. velar asp. stop	k ^h			kh	kh				k	ค	๑๙
vcl. velar stop	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	gk	ก	๒๐
vd. velar stop	g	g	g	g	g	g	g	g	g	ฅ	๒๑
vd. velar nasal	ŋ	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ง	๒๒
vcl. uvular asp. stop	q ^h			qh	qh				hk	ช	๒๓
vcl. uvular stop	q	k'	k'	q	q	x	q	q	ghk	ช	๒๔
vcl. labio-dental fricative	f						f	f			
vd. labio-dental fricative	v								v		
vcl. alveo-palatal fricative	ç						x	x			
vcl. alveolar fricative	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	ซ	๒๕
vd. alveolar fricative	z	z	z	z	z	z	ss	ss	z	ย	๒๖
vcl. post-alveolar fricative	ʃ	sh		sh	sh	sh			sh	ซ	๒๗
vd. velar fricative	ɣ	g'	g'	gh	gh	g'	hh	hh	rg	ฎ	๒๘
vcl. glottal fricative	h	h	h	h	h	h	h	h	h	ฮ	๒๙
vcl. alveolar asp. affricate	ts ^h			ts	ts	ts				ซ	๓๐,๓๑
vcl. alveolar affricate	ts	ts		tc	tc			ts	ts	จ	๓๒,๓๓
vd. alveolar affricate	dz	dz		dz	dz	c	z	z	dz	ฉ	๓๔

	IPA	Bapt	OMF Rom.	Cath New 1985	Cath Old 1984	Seamp (Leo)	Pinyñ Hani	Pinyñ Aini	McD	OMF Thai	Bur
vd. palatal approximant	j	y	y	y	y	y			y	ย	ᵿ
labial velar approximant							w	w			
alveolar lateral approximant	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	ล	ล
glottal stop	ʔ										
close unround. front V.	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	eeh	ᵿ	ᵿ
close round. front V.	y	oi	oi	oi	ü	oi		oi	oeih	ᵿ	ᵿ
close-mid front unround. V.	e	e	e	e	e	e		e	ay	เ -	เ
close-mid front round. V.	æ	oe	oe	oe	oë	oe	yu	yu	oeuh	เ - ɹ	เ ๐
open-mid front unroun. V.	ɛ	eh	eh	eh	è	eh	ie	ie	eh	แ -	แ
mid central V.	ə	eu	eu	eu	ë	eu	e	e	urh	เ - ɹ	เ ๐
open fron unround. V.	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	ah	- ɹ	อ
close back unround. V.	u	ui	ui	ui	ü	ui	ee/ii	ee/ii	uuh	ᵿ	ᵿ
close back round. V.	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	ooh	๗	๗
close mid back round. V.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	oh	โ -	โ ๐
open-mid back round. V.	ɔ	aw	aw	aw	ò	aw	ao	ao	aw	- ɹ	เ - ๐
open back nasalized unround. V.	ã	ah	ah	ang	äng	ang		ah	auh	- ɹ	๗
syllabic bilabial nasal	m			um	'm			m	mm	๗	๗
diphthongs	am	am	am	am	am	am			ahm	๗	๗
	ao	ao	ao	ao	ao	ao			aoh	เ - ɹ	
	ai	ai	ai			ai			aih	โ -	
	ae			ae	ae						
	aɛ			aeh	aè						
	ɔa			awa	òa						
	oɛ				oè						
	ɔɛ			aweh	òè						
	io			io							
	ia						ia	ia			
	iao						iao	iao			
	ie						ie	ie			
	ɛi						iei	iei			
	ua						ua	ua			
	ueo						ueio	ueio			
	ɛɔ				èò						
long vowels	e:			ee	ee						
	ɛ:				èè						

	IPA	Bapt	OMF Rom.	Cath New 1985	Cath Old 1984	Seamp (Leo)	Pinyin Hani	Pinyin Aini	McD	OMF Thai	Bur
	ɔ:				òò						
High register tone	ɿ	-v	-v	-v	-	r	l	l	f	๗	-:
Glottalized mid tone	ɿʔ	-^	-^	-^	-v	v	v	v	xf	-๘	-:
Mid tone	ø				-						˘
Low register tone	ɿ	-v	-v	-v	-v	q	q	q	v	'	-:, ˘
Glottalized low tone	ɿʔ	-^	-^	-^	-^	vq	vq	vq	xv	'๘	-:, ˘
An extra (de-aspirate) tone						vr			f'		

Table 3: A comparison of all the orthographic symbols used to write Akha (Aini) and Hani

The following are transcriptions of different Akha orthographies of a clause; the English gloss is "Akha marriage custom"

Orthography	clause
Baptist	A _v ka _v tsaw ^v jeu _v oe ^v m ^v ba ^v ja _v -eu zah ^v sah ^v k'o _^
OMF (Roman)	A _v ka _v caw ^v jeu _v oe ^v m ^v ba ^v dza _v -eu zah ^v sah ^v k'o _^
Catholic, new	A _v kha _v tsaw ^v jeu _v oe ^v m ^v ba ^v dza _v -eu zang ^v sang ^v qo _^
Catholic, old	A _v kha _v tsò jě _v oě ^v 'm- ba- dza _v ë zäng- säng- qo _^
SEAMP (Leo)	Aq kaq tsawr jeuq oer mr bar dzaq-eu zangr sangq xovq
Pinyin Hani	Aq khaq chaol jeq yul ml bal zal-e ssaol saol qovq
Pinyin Aini	Aq khaq chaol jeq yul ml bal zal-e ssahl sahl qovq
McDaniel	ahv khahv tsawf jurhv oeuhf mf bahf dzahv-urh zauhf sauhv ghkohxv
OMF (Thai)	ล่าล่า ซ้อ ฝ่อ ฮ่อง อี้ม ซ้า ฝ่า เหว ย้อม ฮฮังโฮ๊ะ
Burmese	အါခါ ချော်ချိုဝ်ဆွေးအွမ်းဘားဇော်အိုဝ်ဇွမါဆန်းကိုဏ္ဍ

Table 4: Transcriptions of an Akha/Hani phrase in each orthography

1.3 Literature: What is available for language and cultural maintenance at various levels?

Various types of literature have been developed or translated for Akha. There are health and development materials, folktales, a New Testament, and an Old Testament that is in the final stages of checking and collections of hymns.

1.3.1 Stages of literacy materials³

1.3.1.1 Stage One: Basic Literacy ("Learning to Read")

Purpose: Enable pre-literate people to gain basic reading skills and to learn ways that they can use literacy to improve their lives.

Characteristics: Written by local writers. Concentrates on familiar people, places, activities.

	Level One	Level Two
Print Size	Large (font size 24-18)	Large (font size 24-18)
Pictures	1 per page	1 per page
Length	4-5 pages (except Alphabet Book) 1 sentence per page	6-8 pages 2-3 sentences per page

Table 5: Stage 1: Basic literacy

1.3.1.2 Stage two: Fluency and expansion of reading skills

Purpose: Encourage new readers to gain comprehension and fluency and to use literacy to achieve personal and community goals.

Characteristics: Written, adapted and/or translated by local writers. Original and imported materials are adapted to local context.

	Level one	Level two
Print Size	Regular (font size 14-12)	Regular (font size 12)
Pictures	Every 1-2 pages	Every 2-3 pages
Length	8-20 pages 2-6 sentences per page	10-30 pages 2-8 sentences per page

Table 6: Stage 2: Fluency and expansion of reading skills

1.3.1.3 Stage three: Transfer

Purpose: Enable readers to transfer their reading skills into their second language.

Characteristics: Assumes a speaking knowledge of a second language and builds on that.

1.3.1.4 Stage four: On-going literacy

[Also called Post-Literacy, On-Going, or Life-Long Education]

Purpose: Provide readers with a large amount and variety of literature in their first and second languages that is relevant to their lives, supports their language and culture, provides them with information and ideas that they want to have, stimulates them to learn about the world outside their community, and encourages them to be actively involved in the development process.

³ This classificatory scheme is shortened and adapted from seminar notes by Susan Malone, PhD of SIL.

Characteristics: Includes original, traditional, and imported stories, songs, poetry, and awareness information.

1.3.2 Foundational Akha literacy material⁴

1.3.2.1 Primers

1. A_v ka_v sah_v bo_v dzaw-cu (Akha Primer). No date. Chiang Rai, Thailand: OMF publishers. Baptist script. A three-booklet primer series (20 pages per booklet) that introduces one or two new symbols per page. One picture and a few lines of text are printed on each page. The earliest pages have words out of context but no meaningful sentences. Volume one finishes with a page on numbers. The second book reduces the font size, puts more text on a page and contains a few pages of writing exercises. Volume 3 contains natural but easy one-page stories. A hand-written version was issued in 1991 by Development and Agricultural Project for Akha. These books have been used successfully to teach new readers to read; however, it seems like a fair amount of supplementary material and classroom illustration would be needed.
2. Dzaw Dah_v Beh-cu: A_v ka_v Sah_v Bo_v (Akha Primer). No date. Keng Tung, Myanmar: Keng Tung Baptist Church. 42 pages. A list of letters and tones for reference is at the front. Next follow 'alphabet book' pages for the consonants, analogous to 'A is for Apple'. Five pictures associated with one letter and one sentence per picture cover the alphabet. Next follow 26 pages of 2 page sets. Each set contains one page of 8 pictures followed by a page containing sentence drills connecting with the pictures and based around one vowel. It finishes with numbers and a song. The book is very brief and would present quite a challenge for teachers if it were the only material available; many more drills and other supplementary material would be needed. Volume one finishes with a page on numbers.

1.3.2.2 Stage 1 (Basic Literacy) Level 1

Nothing.

1.3.2.3 Stage 1 Level 2

1. Some of the early pages of the complex / mixed-level books would fit within this level.

1.3.2.4 Stage 2 (Fluency and reading skill expansion) Level 1

1. Many of the middle pages of the complex / mixed-level books would fit within this level.

1.3.2.5 Stage 2 Level 2

1. Many of the middle and late pages of the complex / mixed-level books would fit within this level.
2. Yaw Mui_v Jaw^v Sha^v Do^v -Eu Ga^v Kaw^v (About Health). Village health booklet, 68 pages. Translated and adapted by Da_v bi^v Ceu mui_v and A_v yi^v Joe_v dah. Draft copy for testing produced in a workshop organized by the Applied Linguistics Training Program, Payap Research and Development Institute, Payap University, Chiangmai, Thailand. Uses a story form with suggested treatment at the end of each story. Mid level, not advanced. Uses the Baptist script.
3. A_v Poe_v Daw_v Oe^v 10 Kaw^v (10 Folk stories). Retold by Da_v bi^v Ceu mui_v and A_v yi^v Joe_v dah. Draft copy for testing produced in a workshop organized by the Applied Linguistics Training Program, Payap Research and Development Institute, Payap University, Chiangmai, Thailand. Each story is 3-4 pages each; 51 pages total. Uses the Baptist script.

⁴ We are thankful to Wanda Jennings (SIL and Payap U.) for helping us to evaluate many of the easier materials discussed below.

1.3.2.6 Stage 3 (Transfer to and from another language)

Note that there are no books that we know of that are intended for the purpose of learning to read Akha, Hani or another language if the reader already knows one of these languages. However, there are some resources that potentially could be adapted for this process because of their nature.

1. Ha Kui⁵ and Li Ze Ran (authors). *Pyulniuldoq haqniqdoq gee* ('Spoken Chinese, Spoken Hani'; Hani title). *Hani Hui Hua* ('Spoken Hani'; Chinese title). 1992. Kunming, Yunnan, China: Yunnan Min Zu Chu Ban She (publisher). 364 pages. This advanced book is written to help Hani people learn to speak and read Chinese.
2. Li Yon Suln (author; Li Yong Sui in Chinese script). *Hani Yu Yu Fa* ('Hani Grammar'; Chinese title). 1990. Beijing, China: Min Zu Chu Ban She (publisher). 230 pages. This book is written in Chinese with the examples written in Hani Pin Yin script.
3. Li Qi Bo and Zhang Pei Zhi (authors). *Geeqlaoq Sal* ('Psalms and prayers'; Hani title). *Hani Qui Fu Ge* ('Collection of Hani's Psalm and Prayer', Chinese title) 1996. Printed in China. 288 pages. Kunming, Yunnan, China: Yunnan Min Zu Chu Ban She. A forward and afterward (1 page each) are written in Chinese script. The rest of the book consists of sets of a line in Hani, then a line of Chinese script word for word glosses, followed by Chinese script sentence translating the meaning of the Hani line.
4. Thai script Akha New Testament. If an Akha speaker could already read Thai, presumably she could teach herself to read Akha in Thai script using this book.
5. Burmese script Akha calendars. If an Akha speaker could already read Burmese, presumably she could teach herself to read Akha in Burmese script using this book. Some calendars using the 12 day Akha week (named after the 12 animals of the Chinese 12-year cycle) and Burmese script have been produced.

1.3.2.7 Stage 4 (On-going literacy)

1. Some of the later pages of the complex / mixed-level books would fit within this level.
2. *Ka li za, deu, Mi, za, la, sm, mi, -i, -eu ga, ka* (Wedding practices of Akha Christians). By Laltha Zawa (Amui). Draft copy for testing produced in a workshop organized by the Applied Linguistics Training Program, Payap Research and Development Institute, Payap University, Chiangmai, Thailand. One page of Akha is followed by page containing a Thai translation; 23 pages, mid level, not advanced. Uses the Baptist script. Although this book contains a Thai translation, it is not really suitable for a transitional book.

1.3.2.8 Complex and Mixed-level books

These are relatively large books that begin with introducing the letters and practicing writing the letters.

Some or a lot of syllable practice is included, often with much text on each page. Significant portions of the book contain prose with several paragraphs on a page.

1. *Haqniq Soqmiav Zolkaoq* (Hani Primer Book). 170 pages, from China. 38 chapters. Begins with letter recognition and a penmanship lesson. Then about 30 pages of syllable reading practice interspersed with pictures and paragraphs of prose. The next 130 pages contain poetry and prose with some pictures; some mathematics, measurements, envelope addressing, etc. are included. The prose sections get longer as the section progresses. Among the topics are animal health, crop pest control, and various agricultural topics. The Hani Pinyin script is used. Written in Hani language for the Hani.

⁵ We are thankful to Tian Xiao-mei, a Chinese graduate student at Payap University, for translating the Chinese characters in these books to enable us to provide full bibliographic information.

2. Haqniq Sanqbovq Zaodmq (Aini (Akha) Primer Book). 145 pages, from China. 41 chapters with an appendix. Begins with letter recognition and a penmanship lesson. Then about 45 pages of syllable reading practice interspersed with pictures and paragraphs of prose. The next 80 pages contain poetry and prose with few pictures; some mathematics, measurements, envelope addressing, etc. are included. The appendix contains a consonant and vowel/tone matrix of all the possible syllables in Akha. Written in the Akha language for the Akha people in China (Aini). The Hani Pinyin script is used.
3. A_v ka_v Sah_v bo_x Dzaw-cu Pa^v dm_v (Akha Primer). Compiled by A-Je (Chaiyot) Kukaewkasem. Printed by House of Grace and Akha Bible Institute. Chiangrai, Thailand: December 1997. 268 pages. 32 chapters. It begins with letter recognition and penmanship that can serve as reference for teachers and students to page 22. Then follow 90 pages of syllable practice with one or two pictures per page; this part essentially is a republication of the OMF primer series. The next 90 pages contain 16 stories with occasional pictures. The type font size is reduced for the last one. The next 50 pages contain numbered Akha proverbs and sayings with no pictures. The last 18 pages contain miscellaneous things including numbers and a map of the five-country region in which the Akha live. The Baptist script is used, with the addition of one more tone mark. The addition of this tone mark has limited its acceptance by some audiences, especially in Myanmar. This book represents perhaps a year's worth of student reading material. Because of this 'one large volume' approach, the primer material from the first part of the book cannot be used again by another student, if the reader wants to keep the health and story materials. The size of the book could also be intimidating for new students.

1.3.3 Supplementary Akha literacy resources

1.3.3.1 Books printed in the Akha language (Baptist script)

1. Lewis, Paul W. 1989. A_v ka_v Daw_v -ga_v La_v Pyu^v Daw_v -tai_v Daw_v Di_v sha_v Na_v li_v (Akha—English—Thai Dictionary). Chiang Rai, Thailand: Development and Agricultural Project for Akha. The 29 page introduction includes a geographical overview, 5 pages on phonology, 8 pages on grammar (verbs, nouns, word formation, interrogation, classifiers and particles), 1 page on dialectal differences and 28 item bibliography. There are appendices on Hani transcription of Akha, China Akha (Aini) dialect, Chinese loan words used by China Akha, Akha proverbs, Akha riddles, Akha clans and clothing styles, genealogy, personal names, ancestral offerings, ordering of time, Akha pig latin, and a song written by an Akha student at a University in Bangkok.
2. _____. n.d. (1970s presumed). Akha New Testament. Rangoon: The Bible Society of Thailand.
3. _____. Ja ccu_v -cu ca^v -cu Sah_v bo_x (Akha Hymnal). n.d. (1990s presumed). Printed in Myanmar. 300 hymns in 4 part harmony; 30 pages of responsive readings; English index, Akha index; hard cover.
4. _____. Za_v Nyi Zm_v Daw_v (Akha Ballads, Poems and Songs). 1989. Chiang Rai, Thailand: Development and Agricultural Project for Akha. (313 pages). The book contains oral art forms collected in China, Myanmar and Thailand. This is, in part, a cultural preservation project, because the language of some of the material uses older terminology that is not used by younger people today. However, many older people consider them to be very beautiful. Other songs use a pentatonic scale and can be understood by most speakers. Chapters are: 1. Epic poem of creation, 2. ballads, 3. songs, 4. death related, 5. soul calling and healing songs, 6. blessings, 7. spirit incantations, and 8. others. A three page index of titles is at the end.
5. _____. Daw_v Da_v Haw^v -cu Tsa_v Dzo[^] Daw_v Dcu_v (Akha Proverbs, Riddles and Proverbs). n.d. (1980s presumed). Chiang Rai, Thailand: Development and Agricultural Project for Akha. (113 pages). Some proverbs come from the poetic ballads and contain older, more obscure language; these often

have short descriptions in more modern language. Some proverbs and all the riddles come from modern daily Akha life and are recorded in the current spoken idiom. The first part of each rhyme is spoken by one person, and a second person answers in a line that rhymes with the first.

6. _____. A_v ka_v Daw_v Maw_v Daw_v oe_v (Akha Legends, Stories and Myths). 1989. Chiang Rai, Thailand: Development and Agricultural Project for Akha. (330 pages). The contents of this book were collected in China, Myanmar and Thailand. Several versions of some of these legends exist, with only one being recorded in this book. A few illustrations are included.
7. _____. Yaw Mui_v Jaw^w Sa^v Do[^] -cu Ga_v Kaw[^] (Akha Health Book). 1989. Chiang Rai, Thailand: Development and Agricultural Project for Akha. (131 pages). Adapted from the book *Where there is no doctor*. Many small illustrations are included.

1.3.3.2 Books printed in the Akha language (Roman Catholic script)

1. Gū_v lāng_v sha-ë_v hò- cha-ë_v sāng_v bo_v (Prayers and Hymns in Akha). No date. Printed in Myanmar. Many prayers and perhaps some scripture readings for public and private prayers. 108 hymns. A variety of pictures (photographs, photographs of paintings, line drawings, etc.) are included.

1.3.3.3 Books printed in the Akha language (Pinyin script)

1. Bai Bo Long (author). Kaoldaol maq jav milhaoq (A community which has no forests). Mei You Zha Lan De Di Ping Xian (A horizon without a fence: A collection of short stories and essays). Translated by Bai Bo Long, Bai Ju Zhou and Xiang Ao Ran. 1995. Kunming, Yunnan, China: Yunnan Min Zu Chu Ban She (publisher). 338 pages. A book about the environment. This is a crucial topic for the Akha, for the Akha believe that there must be a forest close to the village for the spirits to inhabit. Pages 1-171 and 336 -338 are in Chinese in Chinese script. Pages 173-335 are in Akha in the Pinyin script. This is an advanced book in both languages; a few pictures are included.

1.3.3.4 Books printed in the Hani language (Pinyin script)

1. Pyulniuldoq haqniqdoq gee (Spoken Chinese, Spoken Hani). 1991. Published in China. 364 pages. This advanced book is written to help Hani people learn to speak and read Chinese.
2. Li shao jun (author). Aoq Hul'a E Miqnieiq (Hani title). Shi Yu Wu (Thing and Object; Chinese title). 1997. Kunming, Yunnan, China: Yunnan Min Zu Chu Ban She (publisher). 286 pages. Pages 1-128 are written in Chinese script and have their own table of contents. Pages 129-284 are Hani in Pinyin script, also with a table of contents. The last two pages of the book again are in Chinese script. This is a series of essays and informative stories describing Hani traditions, customs and world view. Apparently the purpose of this philosophical and artistic book is to invite the reader to think about what she is reading in constructing her own worldview.
3. Nie Nu Ba Xi (author). Daolsal Aqbol (Hani title). Du Sha A Bo (Chinese script title is transliteration). 1996. Kunming, Yunnan, China: Yunnan Min Zu Chu Ban She (publisher). 275 pages. The first 2 pages of the book are in Chinese script. Then follow 178 pages of Hani script with its own table of contents. The rest of the book is a Chinese translation in Chinese script of the Hani. This is a collection of primary sources: old poems (epics, songs, etc.) about a great female hero from the Hani past.

1.3.3.5 Books printed in the Akha language (other scripts)

1. McDaniel, Matthew. Akha Reader. Partially published in 1999. This is a well formatted book with some photographs and stories told by Akha themselves. It is at the advanced level, with much text on a page, and it uses its own unique roman based script. When it is finished, it will be a rather large book apparently.
2. Lewis, Paul W. 1983. Akha New Testament. Location not specified (presumed Bangkok): The Bible Society of Thailand. Thai script Akha New Testament, a transliteration of the Baptist script publication. If an Akha speaker already could read Thai, presumably she could teach herself to read Akha using this book.
3. Burmese script Akha calendars. If an Akha speaker already could read Burmese, presumably she could teach herself to read Akha using this book. Some calendars using the 12 day Akha week (named after the 12 animals of the Chinese 12-year cycle) and Burmese script have been produced.

1.4 Conclusions: Looking to the future

1.4.1 Language endangerment and maintenance

We assume that more than half of some twenty dialects in Northern Laos are endangered. Many of them are enclaved within other languages, such as Louma and Sila. Some of them seem to be moribund, such as Pusa and Mui Ji. But the Jeu g'oe dialect is still very strong and many speakers of other dialects are bilingual (bidialectal) in it. This is a great advantage.

1.4.2 Literacy development: materials

A literacy development project is badly needed. There are advantages to approaching literacy from dialect reunification perspective. Introducing more orthographies is not helpful at this point. Books in Akha covering basic information about the changing world that Akha are now living in would be helpful. They deserve to know about what is happening and how to adapt themselves to the rapidly changing environment. They deserve to be equipped for survival. It is unfortunate that many Akha are not only unaware of what is happening in the wider world but also unaware that there are hundreds of thousands of Akha living in other provinces of their country and in neighboring countries. This unawareness is an important issue to the Akha.

1.4.3 Literacy development: motivation

Today, almost every dialect group feels the need of a writing system. They are talking about preserving their priceless cultural and linguistic heritage in written form. The Akha (largely Baptists) from Myanmar are planning to start a substantial literacy promotion and cultural preservation project by the beginning of

the 21st century. This is an internal drive that coincides with the external motivations of many non-Akha language workers. There is hope.

1.4.4 In closing

In December of this year, the fourth Hani-Akha conference will be held in Jing Hong. Constructing a single writing system will be one of the major issues to be discussed in that conference again. They will have to go through greater challenges in their quest for a single orthography covering all Hani-Akha dialects. (For one thing, Hani has been affected by the Chinese language to a much greater extent than Akha (Aini) has.) But it is possible to reconstruct an international Akha writing system provided all the governments from the five countries are gracious to this people group living in the mountains of Mainland South East Asia. They need external assistance to carry out such a big project.

The Akha language and culture are a rich historical heritage representing the past Tibeto-Burman images. It would be a great loss to this world if this heritage is neglected and vanishes.

1.5 Additional references about the Akha, or Hani, and their language with some short annotations

- Bradley, David. 1977. Akha and southern Loloish. *Papers in South-east Asian linguistics*. 5:23-65. Pacific linguistics, A.49. Canberra: the Australian National University.
- _____. 1978. Proto-Loloish. Copenhagen and London: Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies Monograph Series #39.
- _____. 1996. Tibeto-Burman language of PDR Lao. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area*. Volume 19.1. (pp. 19-27).
- Grimes, Barbara F. 1996. *Ethnologue*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Hansson, Inga-Lill. 1982. A phonological comparison on Akha and Hani. *Linguistics the Tibeto-Burman Area*. Volume 7.1, pp. 63-115.
- _____. 1988. Akheu Akha and Pahi Akha: Two little known Burmese-Yipho languages. Paper presented at the 21st International Conference on Sino-Tibetan languages and linguistics, 5-9 October 1988, University of Lund.
- _____. 1989. A comparison of Akha, Hani, Khatu and Pijo. *Linguistics the Tibeto-Burman Area*. Volume 12.1.
- Indigenous People's Profile (Part Two: 1995). Lao People's Democratic Republic.
- Lewis, Paul W. Undated a. An Akha for a day. Unpublished manuscript. 10 pages. An insightful, but informal, account of what events take place in the daily life of many Akha living in a village.

- _____. Undated b. Phonetic problems involved in teaching Thai to speakers of Lahu and Akha. Unknown publishing details. pp.105-112; 8 pages. Contrasts sound systems of Lahu, Akha and Thai. It contains an analysis of potential problems of Lahu and Akha learning Thai and offers suggestions to facilitate learning.
- _____. 1968a. Akha phonology. *Anthropological Linguistics*, Volume 10, Number 2. University of Colorado.
- _____. 1968b. The Akha's use of infanticide as a eugenic control. Department of Anthropology, University of Colorado. Unpublished manuscript. 11 pages, plus an additional 10 pages of notes.
- _____. 1968c. The role and function of the Akha village priest. *Behavior Science Notes* 3.4, pp. 249-262.
- _____. 1970. *Ethnographic Notes on the Akhas of Burma*. Vol. III, IV. New Haven: HRAFlex Books.
- _____. 1973a. Akha village and political systems. Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon. Unpublished manuscript. 150 pages.
- _____. 1973b. Tone in the Akha language. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 15:4:183-8. University of Oregon.
- _____. 1976a. Family planning among Akhas. Unpublished manuscript. 2 pages.
- _____. 1976b. Mina's story. *Draper World Population Fund Report*, No. 3. pp. 12-15.
- _____. Basic themes in Akha culture. *Contributions to Southeast Asian Ethnography*. 1 September 1982, pp. 86-101.
- _____. 1984. *Akha: People of the Golden Triangle*, pp. 202-239. New York: Thames and Hudson Inc.
- _____. 1992. Basic themes in Akha Culture, in Walker, Anthony R., ed. *The highland heritage: Collected essays on upland North Thailand*. pp. 207-224.
- Lewis, Paul and Elaine. 1984. *Peoples of the Golden Triangle*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
- Li Ke Zhong (author). *Zhai Shen (Village spirits: Research on Hani culture; Chinese title)*. 1998. Kunming, Yunnan, China: Yunnan Min Zu Chu Ban She (publisher). 617 pages. A Hani ethnography. A four page introduction and a three page table of contents in English precede the Chinese script body of the text and a 108 page bibliography of Chinese script references.
- Li Yon Suln (author; Li Yong Sui in Chinese script). *Hani Yu Yu Fa (Hani Grammar'; Chinese title)*. 1990. Beijing, China: Min Zu Chu Ban She (publisher). 230 pages. This book is written in Chinese with the examples written in Hani Pin Yin script.
- Matisoff, James A. 1996. *Phonological inventories of Tibeto-Burman languages (Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus Monograph Series, No. 3)*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Kya Heh, Noel. 1998. A glimpse at the glottalized tones and non-glottalized tones in six Tibeto-Burman Languages. An unpublished research paper for the Linguistics Department at Payap University. (16 pages)

_____. 1999. A summary paper on readings in Shan State languages with a focus on Akha. An unpublished research paper for the Linguistics Department at Payap University. (19 pages)

Opler, M.E. 1945. Themes as dynamic forces in culture. *American Journal of Sociology* 51:198-206.

Renard, Ronald, Kibgarn Phochanachai, Ratanaporn Sethakul, Prasert Bhandhachat and G. Lamar Robert. Evaluation of the Development Agriculture and Education Project for Akha (DAPA): 1995. Research Report No. 123. Chiangmai, Thailand: Payap University, Payap Research and Development Institute. 83 pages. The purpose of this excellent book is to review and evaluate the agricultural and educational work of DAPA; suggestions are made at the end. The paper also reviews the known and assumed history of the Akha, especially in Thailand. It describes the economic, political and social situation among the Akha in Thailand in the early 1990s. A short section surveys the religious situation among the Akha, especially focusing on Christianity. Another section on development contains charts on formal education among the Akha and on Thai language ability as well as reviewing several development projects. A four page bibliography contains several titles associated with the Akha (including some unpublished manuscripts) and many entries about the general socio-economic situation in the Northern Thailand; works in English, German, Thai and Vietnamese are cited.

Walker, Anthony R., ed. *The highland heritage: Collected essays on upland North Thailand*. Singapore: Suvarnabhumi Books. Twelve chapters derived from articles published in the journal *Contributions to Southeast Asian Ethnography* include topics on the region from geographical and economic standpoints, and on aspects of Lahu, Akha, Mlabri, Yao and Lisu cultures.