The Functions of Proclitic Ab and Ghab in Hmub*

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This paper aims to present a syntactic description for two cognate proclitics ab and ghab in Hmub, a Hmong-Mien (Miao-Yao) language spoken in Southeast Guizhou of China. These two proclitics exhibit striking syntactic behaviors and semantic properties. Ab precedes an animate (human) nominal such as a personal name, a kinship term, an adjective or an adjective phrase, and encodes definiteness; ghab, on the other hand, exhibits a variety of functions—from spatial definiteness to relative positioning, subcategory marking to numeral partitive expression. Some host-clitic-combined groups have undergone a process of lexicalization. Hmub shows a distinction between a ghab-nominal and a common nominal. The former refers to an entity which is a part of a whole, but the latter does not. A ghab-noun is referential while a bare noun is non-referential.

Key words: definite, Hmub, lexicalization, nominal classification, specific indefinite

1. Introduction and terminology

1.1 Introduction

Ghab/ab, a nominal phrasal proclitic, is distributed across the languages of the Hmongic branch of the Hmong-Mien family, with local variant forms such as ghaob (in the western part of Hunan Province), ab (AbHmaob in Weining, Guizhou) or gab (Bunu in the northwestern part of Guangxi, Language and Linguistics 17(4) 575–622 © The Author(s) 2016 Reprints and permissions: sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav DOI: 10.1177/1606822X16642359 lin.sagepub.com * An early version of this paper was presented at the Miao-Yao workshop of the 45th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics held in Nanyang Technological University, Singapore on 26–28 October, 2012. I am grateful to Yongxian Luo and Chenglong Huang for their valuable comments, and for Luo’s final polish. My special thanks go to the two anonymous reviewers for their careful and insightful comments, especially on the second version, which has greatly improved this paper; also to Elizabeth Zeitoun (former Executive Editor of Language and Linguistics) for her corrections to earlier versions of this paper. This study was financially supported from the 111 Project of Minzu University of China. Needless to say, I am the sole party responsible for any potential inaccuracies presented in the paper. 1 I adopt the Hmub writing system established in 1956. The first part in a syllable is the onset, the medial is the rime, and the last letter appended to the syllable stands for the tone category. Following are the Hmub phonemes.

(i) Onsets of Hmub:

gh [q] kh [qh] h [h]
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She/Honai in Huidong County of Guangdong). Its proto-form might be tentatively reconstructed as *[qaA]. Here are some reflexes in the Miao languages excerpted from Chen (1993:1–2) and my own studies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonym:</th>
<th>Ghaob Xongb</th>
<th>Hmub</th>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>AbHmaob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village:</td>
<td>Layiping</td>
<td>Yanghao</td>
<td>Dananshan</td>
<td>Shimenkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>地名:</td>
<td>畗乙坪</td>
<td>養高山</td>
<td>大南山</td>
<td>石門堪</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miao Branch:</td>
<td>Eastern Miao</td>
<td>Central Miao</td>
<td>Western Miao</td>
<td>Western Miao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-animate</td>
<td>qa(^{35})</td>
<td>qa(^{33})</td>
<td>qa(^{43}/a^{43})</td>
<td>a(^{55})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animate (human)</td>
<td>a(^{35})</td>
<td>a(^{33})</td>
<td>a(^{43}/qa^{43})</td>
<td>a(^{55})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonym:</th>
<th>Ab Hmiob</th>
<th>Ghab Hmongb</th>
<th>Ghongb Hmongb</th>
<th>Hmongb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village:</td>
<td>Yejipo</td>
<td>Fengxiang</td>
<td>Jiading</td>
<td>Baituo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>地名:</td>
<td>野雞坡</td>
<td>楔香</td>
<td>甲定</td>
<td>擺托</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miao Branch:</td>
<td>Western Miao</td>
<td>Western Miao</td>
<td>Western Miao</td>
<td>Western Miao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-animate</td>
<td>a(^{33/31})</td>
<td>qa(^{33/31})</td>
<td>qa(^{13/31})</td>
<td>a(^{33/55})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animate (human)</td>
<td>a(^{33/31})</td>
<td>a(^{33})</td>
<td>qa(^{13/31})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Layiping is located in Jiwei Township, Huayuan County, Hunan Province (湖南省花垣縣吉衛鄉); Yanghao is in Sankeshu Township, Kaili City, Guizhou Province (貴州省凱里市三棵树鎮); Dananshan is in Yanzikou Township, Bijie City, Guizhou Province (貴州省畢節市燕子口鎮); Shimenkan is in Zhongshui Township, Weining County, Guizhou Province (貴州省威甯縣中水鎮); Yejipo is in Xianqiao Township, Fuquan City, Guizhou Province (貴州省福泉市仙橋鄉); Fengxiang is in Chong’an Township, Huangping County, Guizhou Province (貴州省黃平縣重安鎮); Jiading is in Gaopo Township, Huaxi District, Guiyang City, Guizhou Province (貴州省貴陽市花溪區高坡鄉); Baituo is in Qingyan Township, Huaxi District, Guiyang City, Guizhou Province (貴州省貴陽市花溪區青岩鎮).


(iii) Tones of Hmub:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto Tones</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tones</td>
<td>1(^{st}) 2(^{nd}) 3(^{rd}) 4(^{th}) 5(^{th}) 6(^{th}) 7(^{th}) 8(^{th})</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing system</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 4th and 6th tones are breathy.

2 Yanghao does not have the proclitic a\(^{35}\)(ad) but a\(^{33}\)(ab); a\(^{35}\) (ad) is a noun, meaning 'sister' (see Zhang & Xu 1990:1 for details). The form of the proclitic in Dananshan should be qa\(^{43}\)(qhab) but not qa\(^{43}\), for the latter cannot be found in Xian’s (2000) dictionary, or in the native authors’ works (Li 1992, 2002; Luo & Yang 2004), while the former can.
These variant forms occur so frequently in these languages that they immediately draw the attention of researchers, while their uses and semantics are so elusive and complicated that no consensus has been reached among scholars so far. In the literature they are referred to as prefixes (H. Chen 2009; Q. Chen 1993, 2003; Li 2002; H. Shi 1987, 1997; Yi 1961), articles (Luo 1980, 1990, 2005; Xiang 1999), both prefixes and articles (Guan 2006), and proclitics (Li 1992; Shi 1986; C. Wang 1986; F. Wang 1985; Wang & Wang 1996; Yue 1979). Most of the detailed accounts are devoted to ghaob and ab in Ghaob Xongb, a Miao language spoken in Hunan Province (commonly also known as the Eastern dialect of Miao; see Chen 2009; Guan 2006; Long 1988; Luo 1980, 1990, 2005; R. Shi 1986; Z. Shi 1996; Yi 1961; Yu 2011). With regard to ab and ghab in Hmub, only F. Wang (1982, 1985) and C. Wang (1981, 1986:25–27) have provided sketchy accounts. It is obvious that Wang (1981:246) has failed to interpret the functions of ghab/ghaob, as he claims, for instance, that the meanings of the nouns do not change at all when the nouns take ghaob. None of them links the proclitics ab and ghab together from a historical viewpoint either.

The paper is structured as follows. Following the introduction in §1, §2 will focus on the synchronic description of the functions of ab, which is found to be a definite proclitic for person. Section 3 will discuss the functions of ghab and §4 will further demonstrate the distinction between ghab-NPs and common NPs. Section 5 will try to round up all the previous points about ghab and ab, draw out their similarities and discuss the degree of boundedness regarding the combinations of the hosts with these proclitics. Section 6 will show that ab and ghab are cognates which split from proto-Hmub form *qaA. After their split, ab and ghab have come to convey different functions, and have developed in different directions.

1.2 Basic properties

1.2.1 Definiteness

This study involves definiteness and I accept the notions of Lyons (1999:14), which have developed from familiarity theory (Christophersen 1939; Hawkins 1978). According to Lyons, the identifiability and inclusiveness of the referent for the hearer plays a crucial role in diagnosing definiteness. Generally, there are several other ways of making nominal phrases definite in Hmub. Pronouns, possessive constructions, noun phrases with demonstratives, and proper names can convey definiteness intrinsically. A nominal phrase with a bare classifier can be indefinite or definite, but it is always referential or specific. However, when occupying the initial syntactic slot serving as a topic or subject, it is often interpreted as definite, especially in existential sentences. Proclitics ab and ghab also serve as devices to convey definiteness, as illustrated in the following sections.

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4 Hmub has developed a complex system of five demonstratives; see Shi (2007).
1.2.2 Proclitic

According to the four criteria to distinguish affixes from clitics advanced by Zwicky & Pullum (1983:503–504), *ab* and *ghab* are proclitics rather than prefixes. These four main criteria are as follows:

(A) Clitics can exhibit a low degree of selection with respect to their heads, while affixes exhibit a high degree of selection with respect to their stems.

(B) Arbitrary gaps in the set of combination are more characteristic of affixed words than of clitic groups.

(C) Morphophonological idiosyncrasies are more characteristic of affixed words than of clitic groups.

(D) Semantic idiosyncrasies are more characteristic of affixed words than of clitic groups.

According to criteria A, C and D, *ab* and *ghab* must be treated as clitics. The degree of selection with respect to the following nominal elements is rather low both for *ab* and *ghab*. The phonological forms of *ghab* and *ab* are regularly predictable when attached to their hosts, and the meaning of compounds *ab*-NP and *ghab*-NP is also very regular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ab (§2)</th>
<th>Ghab (§3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>–Person nouns</td>
<td>–Common nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>·person names</td>
<td>–Classifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>·kinship terms</td>
<td>–Numerals that are multiples of ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–Adjectival phrases</td>
<td>–A few verb phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>–Certain intransitive verb phrases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See §2 and §3 for detailed discussions.

Given the fact that the Hmub language is a typical isolating language, *ab* may be analyzed as (1) a derivational prefix, (2) a proclitic or (3) an independent word. The first analysis is not viable since a derivational prefix is a constituent part of a word which cannot be detached from its root as, for example, the Chinese plural suffix *–men* 我们, which cannot be removed from the root/stem *wo* 我, *ni* 你 or *ta* 他; but Hmub *ab* can be separated from the element it attaches to and the element still expresses the same concept. In other words, it just encodes familiarity and is not a constituent part of the word (see §2.2); (3) is probably also false because *ab* is never used independently (C. Wang 1986; F. Wang 1985). So, *ab* is better treated as a proclitic than as a word. *Ghab* can get a stress in some pragmatic contexts where it combines with a numeral multiple of 10 or a singular classifier in order to express that the number is larger than expected (see §3.5). This analysis can support the proposal that *ghab* is a proclitic, but not a prefix.

1.2.3 Phrasal proclitics

Both *ghab* and *ab* are phrasal proclitics. According to Lyons (1999:63), a phrasal clitic ‘attaches, not necessarily to a head or to any specified constituent, but to one of the boundaries of
a phrase’. Both *ghab* and *ab* generally attach to a nominal, but not necessarily. *Ab* can also attach to bare adjectives and verbs, or to adjective and verbal phrases, and *ghab* to verbs or verbal phrases, classifiers or classifier phrases and numerals that are multiples of 10, and they are attached to the boundary of a phrase, not just to a nominal.

The main data for the paper are collected from this author’s own native language collection from Yuliang Village, Wanshui Township, Kaili City, Guizhou Province, PRC; my variety differs slightly from the official Yanghao dialect phonologically and lexically. Other sources are as follows. Xijiang dialect data of Abang Yang (楊阿榜), a retired faculty member from Minzu University of China (中央民族大學), which has been further checked by Jinping Li (李錦平) of Minzu University of Guizhou (貴州民族大學). Bao’en dialect data is from Anlong Ji (姬安龍), a linguist in Guizhou Minzu Yanjiusuo (貴州民族研究所). Jinbao data are from Shengchun Pan (潘勝春), Minzu University of Guizhou. Kaitang data are from Yongxiang Zhang (張永祥), Minzu University of China. And Taipan data are from Yiru Li (李一如), Huazhong University of Science and Technology (華中科技大學).

2. *Ab*: a proclitic designating definiteness for person

2.1 *Ab* is not used as an address proclitic

In most South Chinese dialects, such as Cantonese and Min, there exists an address proclitic *ah* (*a*=) which encodes a respectful or friendly attitude of the speaker towards the addressee. The proclitic *a* or the like is found in some Hmongic languages as Ghaob Xongb in Huayuan (R. Shi 1997:1–3), Aizhai of Jishou of Hunan (Yü 2011:31), and Songtao of Guizhou (Luo 2005:37). As for Tai-Kadai languages, some are found to have this element as Zhuang in Zhongshan (達山) of Guangxi and Buyi in Ceheng (冊亨) of Guizhou; while others lack such a counterpart, as is the case with Dong in Rongjiang (榕江) of Guizhou, Zhuang in Yizhou (宜州) and Wuming (武鳴) of Guangxi and Shui in Sandu (三都) of Guizhou, according to my investigation.5

The Hmub proclitic *ab*6 is attached to a personal name, a kinship term, or an adjective or adjective phrase which depicts a distinct trait of a person. Because both the Chinese *a*= and the Hmub *ab* are attached to personal names and kinship terms, it often leads to misinterpretation of the *ab*-NP in Hmub. Both C. Wang (1986:29) and F. Wang (1985:27) describe *ab* as part of the personal name, and consider *ab* as something like the address proclitic *a*= in Cantonese:7

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5 The informants were: Guoyan Zhou (周國炎, Buyi); Junfang Wang (王俊芳, Dong); Jianxun Liu (劉建勳, Yizhou Zhuang); Jingyun Wei (韋景雲, Wuming Zhuang), all from Minzu University of China; Mingying Wei (韋明應, Zhongshan Zhuang, Yunnan Nationalities University); and Xuechun Wei (韋雪純, Shui, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences).

6 It is reflected as *aib* ['e'] in Yanghao, but recently orthographed as *ab* in current literature.

7 Abbreviations used in examples are as follows: person is indicated 1, 2, 3; PRX first-person-centered proximal demonstrative; 2PRX second-person-centered proximal demonstrative; MED medial demonstrative; CL classifier; COG cognitional demonstrative; DST distal demonstrative; POSS possessive particle; NMM proper name for man; LK link; NMF proper name for woman; PFR perfect aspect; SG singular number; PL plural number; NG negator; COP copular; PRC proclitic; PRT particle; DIR direction; MD mood particle; IDP ideophone; ADV adverbial marker.

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(1) Aib  Jenb  Aib  Lix  Aib  Nax  Aib  Nil

PRC  NMM  PRC  NMM  PRC  NMF  PRC  NMF

(C. Wang 1986:29, English gloss added)

C. Wang (1986:29) glosses aib as ལ, although the Chinese character [ai] does not have the same functions/meanings as the Hmub proclitic aib/ab in Yanghao does. The fact that ab can also be attached to kinship terms and adjectives was not noticed by Wang because ab is not used in his mother tongue, the Taijiang dialect.

In fact, the Hmub ab is different from the a= in some varieties of Chinese and the languages mentioned above in at least three ways.

First, an 阿(a=)-nominal in Minnan or Cantonese can be used both as an address term and a reference term, as illustrated in (2) for Minnan, while an ab-nominal in Hmub can only be used as a reference term. Thus (3a) is an address term which is grammatical, while (3b) is not.

(2) a. a³³ bun²⁴ li³³ bie³³ khi⁵³ tau³³ wi²⁴?

阿文你---去哪裡
PRC NMM 2SG will go where
‘Where are you going, a=Wen?’

b. a³³ bun²⁴ khi⁵³ tau³³ wi²⁴ a³³?

阿文去哪裡---
PRC NMM go where MD
‘Where has a=Wen gone?’

(3) a. Nix, mongx mongl khangd deis?

NMM 2SG go where

b. *Ab Nix, mongx mongl khangd deis?

PRC NMM 2SG go where
‘Nix, where are you going?’

Second, a name or kinship term with 阿(a=) in Cantonese or the languages mentioned above often carries an overtone of respect on the part of the speaker for the elder hearer, while the ab-nominal in Hmub does not necessarily do so, as illustrated in examples (4)–(7):

(4) Wil jus deix qit das mongl, ab Jux yangf hvib hxot

1SG really angry die DIR PRC NMM bad heart time

seix qib yaf wil.
always bully 1SG
‘I’m really angry to death with that bad-hearted Jux who always bullies me.’
We really hate Saib Xongt, the murderer.

That Jux who should be killed with knife has been here again!

Nix is a very corrupted person.

All the personal names in the utterances above take ab, but none of them shows that the speaker has respect for or favors the referent of the ab-personal-names. Instead, the speaker in (4) is extremely angry with the ill-hearted Jux who always bullies him. In (5), the speaker hates Saib Xongt who is the murderer. The speaker in (6) curses Jux and would prefer not to meet him again. In (7), Nix is a very bad person who should not be respected or favored.

The third difference is the historical origin. Ab in Hmub split from the proto-Hmub form *ghab [qaA] (see §6), while the Chinese 阿(야=) appears as 阿 in Chinese literature during the Han dynasty, and its initial in middle Chinese falls in the first class of the Ying group of initials (影母一等) (《廣韻》為「鳥何切」) and is reconstructed as a glottal stop [ʔ] in archaic Chinese (Karlgren 1987[1954]:103; Li 1971:21; Pulleyblank 1962; Wang 1980). The proto-initial of ab in Hmub and that of 阿 in Chinese are not the same, so they may originate from different sources.

2.2 Ab is not part of a personal name or a kinship term

Ab is not a part of the kinship term or a personal name for the following two reasons: (i) a traditional Hmub name is a mono-syllabic form without ab when given to a Hmub baby; (ii) kinship terms or personal names can be used independently without ab, and in some situations or contexts they must be used independently:
(9) Mongx bangf laib nangx bit gol ait deis?
2sg POSS CL name call how
‘What is your name?’ (Lit. ‘How is your name called?’)

a. Wil bangf laib nangx bit gol ait Nix.
1sg POSS CL name call NMM

b. *Wil bangf laib nangx bit gol ait ab Nix.
1sg POSS CL name call PRC NMM
‘My name is Nix.’ (Lit. ‘My name is called Nix.’)

(10) a. Mangx vangl dail bit ait Nix id niangb ax niangb zaid?
2pl village CL name NMM COG at not at home

b. *Mangx vangl dail bit ait ab Nix id niangb ax
2pl village CL name PRC NMM COG at not
niangb zaid?
at home
‘Is the person named Nix (living) in your village at home or not?’

When is ab occurring with a kinship term or a personal name? In what situations or contexts is it attached to a nominal? What function does it convey to the nominal? Answers to these questions are given below.

2.3 Ab appended to personal names conveys definiteness

A personal name with ab is a definite NP. As a result, ab cannot be attached to the name in a situation where the hearer cannot identify the referent, or in a context where there is a demonstrative, because both ab and the demonstrative express a definite referent. This is the reason why (9b) and (10b) are not acceptable. In a situation where the addressor believes the addressee can identify the referent, the procliticized name will be used, as illustrated in (11):

(11) Ab Jex nas ab Jenb dat nongd xit dib.
PRC NMM LK PRC NMM this morning mutually beat
‘Jex and Jenb scuffled with each other this morning.’

Both interlocutors can identify the persons named respectively as Jex and Jenb in (11) when their conversation continues.9

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9 In order to help the addressee solve the identification task because there may be several persons named as Jex or Jenb they know, the addressor would append the name of Jex or Jenb’s father’s to Jex or Jenb, as Jex Lix (father’s name) or Jenb Dax (father’s name), making the reference unique. If there still exists a name that coincides with the one to be mentioned, then the name of his grandfather or of the village is required such as Jex Lix (father’s name) Yent (grandfather’s name), or Jenb Dax (father’s name) Vob Gangb (village name).
The speaker uses the construction of \{ab + personal name\} if the interlocutors are aware of the person referred to, even if they don’t personally know the latter, as in (12):

(12) Ab Mof Zux Xif dios hxot deis yis?
P R C C h a i r m a n M a o C o p w h e n b o r n

‘When was Chairman Mao born?’

In (12), the participants of the conversation may have been born after Chairman Mao died. The reason why the speaker says so is because he assumes that the addressee can identify the referent. If he wants to emphasize his own identity to the hearer, especially in imperative mood, the speaker adds ab to his own name with the first-person-centered proximal demonstrative nongd as an intensifier, as in (13):

(13) a. Ax gid ngangt ax dot wil leif!
N G l o o k d o w n 1 S G M D

‘Don’t look down upon me!’

b. Ax gid ngangt ax dot ab Nix nongd leif!
N G l o o k d o w n P R C N M M I P R X M D

‘Don’t look down upon this Nix whom you should have known about!’

Nix in (13b) is the speaker’s own name. The distinction between (13b) and (13a) is that (13a) is an unmarked way in which the speaker refutes the prejudice against him, while in (13b), besides expressing this refutation, he intends to emphasize his own identity by objectifying himself as another party: ‘This is Nix and no others, and you should have been able to identify what kind of person Nix is.’

2.4 Kinship terms attached with ab

The speaker will attach ab to the kinship term which denotes the relative only when the relationship is shared by the speaker and the addressee, as exemplified below:

(14) Ab mangs mongl gid deis mongl yangx?
P R C m o t h e r g o w h e r e D I R P R F

‘Where has (our) mother gone?’

(15) Ab ghet mongl gid deis mongl yangx?
P R C g r a n d p a g o w h e r e D I R P R F

‘Where has (our) grandpa gone?’

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10 This involves the mental transfer mechanism (see Langacker 1987:§3.3, §2.4; Vandeloise 1984).
(16) Ab ad mongl gid deis mongl yangx?
PRC sister go where DIR PRF
‘Where has (our) elder sister gone?’

In (14), both interlocutors are the children of the ‘mother’; in (15), the grandchildren of the ‘grandpa’; in (16), brothers or sisters of the ‘elder sister’. There are, however, exceptions that are motivated pragmatically and culturally. A cousin or even a close friend would say (14) to the hearer if s/he wants to express that her/his relation with the hearer or the hearer’s family is very close, as if they were born of the same parents. The same is true of (15) and (16). Besides, the speaker of (15) and (16) may also be a parent or the grandma of the hearer. The reason is that Hmub people practice a social institution of teknonymy to show their love for the children or grandchildren, in which an older speaker will take the perspective of the junior hearer. Ab in this context can be interpreted as ‘our (inclusive)’ in English, which apparently encodes definite reference. Therefore, the terms for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ whose kinship relation is shared only by the spouse cannot be used with ab:

(17) *Ab yus mongl gid deis mongl yangx?\(^{11}\)
PRC husband go where DIR PRF
‘Where has (our) husband gone?’

(18) *Ab wid mongl gid deis mongl yangx?
PRC wife go where DIR PRF
‘Where has (our) wife gone?’

### 2.5 Ab: definite nominalization and nicknaming

An adjective phrase or a verbal phrase which describes an idiosyncratic trait of a person is often attached to ab when the speaker thinks the hearer can identify the referent, as shown in (19a) (bare adjective), (19b) (adjective phrase) and (19c) (verb phrase).

(19) a. Ab Diangs lul mongl yangx.
PRC fat old DIR PRF
‘That fat person has passed away.’

b. Dliul, mongx dax leit yangx. Ab Zeib
blind 2SG come arrive PRF PRC lame
Lob ax bil dax leit?
foot NG come arrive
‘Blind one, you are here now. Has the lame one not arrived?’

\(^{11}\) In Hmub and some other Miao languages, the concepts for ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ can be expressed in various ways. In Hmub, there are three terms for ‘husband’ (yus, jub bad and ghet) and three terms for ‘wife’ (wid, jub mais and wuk). Wid and yus are ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ before having children, jub mais and jub bad after having children and still in the age of bearing, wuk and ghet are ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ who have grandchildren. (See Shi 2011, 2013 for details.)
c. Ab bik hmid nas ab lod lob vangs ax jas
    PRC break tooth and PRC break foot look for NG find
    ab maf naix.
    PRC kill person.
    ‘The tooth-broken one and the leg-broken one cannot find the murderer.’

From a cognitive point of view, expressions like those in (19) are metonyms, naming people by the traits associated with them. In Hmub, there are two ways of nominalizing an adjective phrase depicting a person: (i) dail (classifier, animacy, singular)/laix (classifier for person with respect, singular) + adjective/adjective phrase, and (ii) ab (proclitic) + adjective/adjective phrase. The distinction between them lies in that the former may express indefiniteness in certain contexts, and the latter definiteness only.

A common noun becomes a nickname metaphorically or metonymously when attached to ab, which is used only as a reference term:

(20) xed ‘tiger’ > ab Xed nail dab ‘loach’ > ab Nail Dab
    mox ‘manure’ > ab Mox diangx ‘tallow’ > ab Diangx
    liod ‘cattle’ > ab Liod ngak ‘baby’ > ab Ngak

2.6 Anaphorical use of ab

In story-telling, the classifier-nominalized adjective phrase is used to refer to a person first mentioned (antecedent), while the ab-nominalized one anaphorically denotes the second mention of a person previously mentioned. Consider the following examples:

(21) Sangs lul id maix laib zaid zab jid-dax dail hvib lob,
    time ancient COG have CL family five brother CL tall foot
    dail vas naix, dail kib seil, dail bongt ves nas
    CL acute ear CL shiver cold CL strong strength and
    dail gek seil. … dief jox eb ghax gol ab hvib
    CL hard cold wade CL river then call PRC tall
    lob mongl, ghangt ghangx ghax gol ab bongt ves mongl ….
    foot go shoulder pole then call PRC strong strength go

‘Once upon a time, there were five brothers in a family: one with long legs, one with acute hearing, one always shivering with cold, one with enormous strength, and one good at enduring cold.…When asked to wade across the river, (they) sent the one with long legs to go. When being asked to shoulder heavy loads, (they) sent the one with fierce strength to go.…’
In (21), the classifier-nominalized phrases and their counterpart *ab*-nominalized phrases cannot be conversely exchanged. It shows that the latter can be used anaphorically, while the former cannot in a discourse.

Himmelmann (1996) found that in English texts, the indefinite article *a* is used for the first mention of a referent, whereas demonstratives (*this, that*) are used at second mention, and the definite article or pronouns for the third, fourth or fifth mention for a discourse participant. The proclitic *ab* in Hmub roughly mirrors the role of the English article here:

(22) Pongd naix id maix ib laix zeib lob, dol naix
CL-group people COG have one CL lame foot CL-PL people
mongl hvangd wat, dail zeib lob id des ax jas.
go fast very CL lame foot COG follow NG meet
Ab zeib ghax genx gab-lab gab-lab des dangl ghbangb. Lob eb-mais
PRC lame then cry IDP IDP follow end back come tears
not wat, nenx ghax ax bongf gid.
much very 3SG ADV NG see road

‘There was a lame person in the group (absent from the narrating setting). The people went very fast and the lame one could not follow them. So he cried and followed them. With streaming eyes, he could not see.’

But the Hmub model does not exactly follow this English model. An NP with a classifier is used at first mention. An NP with a demonstrative or the proclitic *ab* is used at second mention, depending on the focus of the speaker. If deixis is highlighted, a demonstrative will be preferred, otherwise *ab* is used. For the third, fourth and fifth mention, either an *ab*-NP or a pronoun is used. A pronoun is used where the referent is easy to identify, while an *ab*-NP is preferred where the referent is hard to identify.

### 2.7 Combination with possessive phrases

The conditions are complex when *ab* is combined with possessive phrases. For an NP with a possessive phrase, *ab* is normally not used if the head is a kinship term.

(23) a. wil zaid wub nenx zaid ad
   1SG POSS granny 3SG POSS sister

b. ? wil zaid ab wub ? nenx zaid ab ad
   1SG POSS PRC granny 3SG POSS PRC sister
   ‘my granny’ ‘his/her sister’
The examples in (23) are NPs with kinship terms as heads that express ‘my granny’ and ‘her/his sister’ respectively in Hmub. Those in (23a) without \textit{ab} are grammatical. Those in (23b) sound quite odd because \textit{ab} in this context means ‘our (inclusive)’, which clashes with the possessive determiner (see §2.3).

\textit{Ab} can be optionally added to the head if the head is a personal name, as illustrated in (24):

(24) a. wil zaid Vob nenx zaid Nix  
\hspace{1cm} 1SG POSS NMF 3SG POSS NMM

b. wil zaid ab Vob nenx zaid ab Nix  
\hspace{1cm} 1SG POSS PRC NMF 3SG POSS PRC NMM

‘my family’s Vob’ ‘his/her family’s Nix’

The hosts in (24) are personal names and (24a) and (24b) are both grammatical, but those in (24b) provide a guarantee of identifiability. The possessive marker \textit{zaid} in (24a) is often phonetically weakened (see below), while it is not in (24b).

\textit{Ab} is obligatorily attached to the head when the head is an adjective as illustrated below:

(25) a. *wil zaid vas nenx zaid niat  
\hspace{1cm} 1SG POSS clever 3SG POSS foolish

b. wil zaid ab vas nenx zaid ab niat  
\hspace{1cm} 1SG POSS PRC clever 3SG POSS PRC foolish

‘that foolish one of my family’ ‘that foolish one of his/her family’

In (25), the adjectives occupy the position of a host. The examples in (25a) are not acceptable, while (25b) sounds natural. This can be understood as ‘the clever person of my family as you know’, ‘the foolish person of his family whom both you and I can identify’ respectively.

Semantically, \textit{zaid} displays a synchronic cline of senses: (a) ‘house’ > (b) ‘home’ > (c) ‘family (classifier)’ > (d) ‘family possessive marker’. Examples:

(26) laib zaid (CL-house) ‘a/the house’  
niangb zaid (at/live-home) ‘at home’  
ib zaid naix (one-family-CL-people) ‘a family (of all members)’  
wil zaid mais (1SG-POSS-mother) ‘my mother’

This family possessive marker \textit{zaid} is often unstressed, with its initial and final lost; only the tone value is left and attached to the preceding host:
(27) Phrases Non-reduced form Reduced form Meaning
wil zaid mais \([vi^{22} \ tse^{35} \ me^{13}]\) \([vi^{22-35} \ me^{13}]\) my mother
wil zaid bad \([vi^{22} \ tse^{35} \ pa^{35}]\) \([vi^{22-35} \ pa^{35}]\) my father
nenx zaid ghet \([nen^{55} \ tse^{35} \ q^{44}]\) \([nen^{55-35} \ q^{44}]\) his/her grandfather
ab Hof zaid wuk\([a^{33} \ ho^{31} \ tse^{35} \ vu^{53}]\) \([a^{33-35} \ ho^{31-35} \ vu^{53}]\) Hof’s grandmother
wil zaid ab vas \([vi^{22} \ tse^{35} \ a^{33} \ ya^{13}]\) \([vi^{22-35} \ a^{33} \ ya^{13}]\) That clever one of my family

When *zaid* occurs with kinship terms, as in (23), its meaning is very weak; with proper names and adjectives, as in (24) and (25), *zaid* functions as a noun ‘home’ or ‘family’.12

To summarize, *ab* can be attached to kinship terms, personal names and adjectives to form a construction that is used only in terms of reference and encodes definiteness.

3. The functions of *ghab*: from spatial definiteness to boundaries

3.1 Common NP procliticized with *ghab*: spatial definiteness

*Ghab* can be added to a common noun/noun phrase to express the place where the referent of the common noun lies. Only under the condition of identifiability will the speaker choose the *ghab*-nominal phrase; otherwise he will choose the construction of ‘classifier + common noun’. A noun phrase with a classifier often signals specificity (it is usually indefinite, but definite in the case where it takes the initial syntactical position or is used in an immediate situation).13 Compare (a) with (b) respectively:

(28) a. Mongx mongl *ghab* jangs liod tiet dail liod dax!  
2SG go PRC lair scalper lead CL scalper out  
‘Go to the lair and lead the scalper out here!’

b. ?Mongx mongl *laib* jangs liod tiet dail liod dax.  
2SG go CL lair scalper lead CL scalper out  
‘Go to a lair and lead a scalper out here.’

(29) a. Mongx mongl *ghab* tongd hlet qeb laib ghent lol  
2SG go PRC bellows iron take CL hammer back  
leif!  
MD  
‘Go to the place of metal bellows to fetch the hammer!’

---

12 I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out.

13 I am again grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing this to my attention.
b. *Mongx mongl laib tongd hlet qeb laib ghent lol
   2SG go CL bellows iron take CL hammer back
   leif!
   MD
   ‘Go to a metal bellows to fetch the hammer!’

Examples (28a) and (28b) are different: (28a) is definite and (28b) indefinite. Examples in (29)
are imperative sentences. Example (29b) is ungrammatical because the phrase laib tongd hlet is
indefinite specific and it should be definite in this context, otherwise the hearer doesn’t know how
to execute the command. If a demonstrative is added to it, then (29b) becomes acceptable, as
in (30):

   (30) Mongx mongl laib tongd hlet aib qeb laib ghent lol
      2SG go CL bellows iron DST take CL hammer back
      leif!
      MD
      ‘Go to that metal bellows to fetch the hammer!’

Example (30a) has a demonstrative and is acceptable. This strongly suggests that ghab, as in
(28a) and (29a), conveys a definite place around an object designated.

The ghab-nominal plays the role of locative argument in syntax because it often follows
directional verbs such as mongl ‘go’ and positional verbs as niangb ‘sit, live’ as in (28) and (29),
or locative prepositions such as diot ‘into, onto’ and gangl ‘from (a place)’.

This analysis is further supported by the fact that the ghab-nominal can be used as the head of
a phrase modified by a demonstrative. As Hmub demonstratives cannot be independently used, they
must co-occur with a classifier (Shi 2007:110; Zhang et al. 1980), as illustrated in (31).

   (31) a. *lix aib
       paddy field DST
       ‘that paddy’
   b. laib lix aib
       CL paddy field DST
       ‘that paddy’
   c. ob laib lix aib
       two CL paddy field DST
       ‘those two paddies’

A locative noun as khangd/hangd (place) or bet (place) can be directly attached to a demonstra-
tive without a classifier as in (32), but exhibits different syntactical behaviors when co-occurring
with numerals, as illustrated in (33) and (34).

   (32) a. khangd aib ‘there/that place’
       place DST
   b. bet aib ‘there/that place’
       place DST
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(33) a. *ob khangd aib  b. ob bet aib  
    two place DST  two CL DST  
    ‘those two places’  ‘those two places’

(34) a. ob laib khangd aib  b. *ob laib bet aib  
    two CL cave DST  two CL place DST  
    ‘those two caves’  ‘those two places’

As illustrated in (33), *khangd cannot co-occur with numerals, but bet can. This means bet can be construed as a classifier while *khangd cannot. In other words, the referent of bet can be individualized while that of *khangd cannot. Examples (33b) and (34a) are grammatical, but *khangd and bet are differently construed, respectively as ‘cave’ and ‘piece’, with *khangd denoting entities but not locations. Example (34b) is ungrammatical because bet is not a locational noun but a classifier, which clashes with another classifier *laib.

As a locative noun, a *ghab-nominal can take a postposed demonstrative but not a preposed numeral, as (35):

(35) a. ghab diux aib  b. *ob ghab diux aib  
    PRC door DST  two PRC door DST  
    ‘the door there’  ‘those two doors’

c. ob laib ghab diux aib  
    two CL PRC door DST  
    ‘those two doors’

Example (35c) denotes entities but not locations, and it is grammatical, as *khangd and bet in (33) and (34).

In the *ghab-nominal construction, the referent of the nominal must relate to an inalienable location, thus it must be located in a place for a long time as illustrated below:

(36) *Mongx niangb ghab kent nend ait laib xid?  
    2SG at PRC basket 2PRX do CL what  
    ‘What are you doing there where the basket lies?’

(37) Mongx niangb ghab teb eb nend ait laib xid?  
    2SG at PRC vat water 2PRX do CL what  
    ‘What are you doing there where the water vat (or the cistern) stands?’

Thus, (36) is not acceptable because a basket is movable and not often put in a place for a long time, while (37) sounds very natural because a cistern is put in a place permanently or at least for quite a long time. By using the classifier *jil instead of *ghab and adding an explicit reference to ‘place’ (bet), (36) becomes acceptable, as illustrated in (38):
3.2 Toponym

When a *ghab*-nominal expressing a definite place is frequently used, then it becomes lexicalized as a toponym. There are a lot of place names with *ghab* in the Hmub community of Kaili City and the counties of Huangping, Leishan and Majiang. Below are some examples collected from the village of Yuliang, (39a) with common nouns, (39b) with place names.

(39) a. Common noun

-vangx vib (range-rock) ‘rocky range’
gongb eb (ditch-water) ‘water ditch’
det dlenx (tree-peach) ‘peach tree’
lul bangb (big bridge-fall) ‘fallen big bridge’

b. Place/village name

Ghab Vangx Vib (PRC-range-rock) ‘the place of the rocky range’
Ghab Gongb Eb (PRC-ditch-water) ‘the place with a ditch’
Ghab Det Dlenx (PRC-tree-peach) ‘the place of the peach tree’
Ghab Lul Bangb (PRC-big bridge-fall) ‘the place where the big bridge fell down’

Other places with *ghab* known throughout the Hmub area include:

(40) Common noun               Place name               Meaning
     dangx (ritual-ground)      Ghab Dangx             the village where lusheng playground is
     diuk (a kind of bamboo)    Ghab Diuk               the place where there is bamboo
     lul hsud (bridge-chain)    Ghab Lul Hsud         the place of the chain suspension bridge
     pab (split, chop)          Ghab pab                —
     det mangx (tree-maple)     Ghab Mangx             the place where maples grow
     nangl dliangb              Ghab Nangl Dliangb    the ghost-haunting-downstream
     yif                        Ghab Yif               —
     Dongb (thatch)             Ghab Dongb             the place where thatches grow

*Ghab Dangx* refers to Kaitang Township of Kaili City (凱里市凱棠鄉), *Ghab Diuk*, the administrative village of Kaijue of Xijiang Township of Leishan (雷山縣西江鎮開覺村), and *Ghab Lul Hsud*, a place name in Chong’an Township of Huangping (黃平縣重安鎮鏡子橋). There are a few places named as *Ghab Mangx* in the area: *Ghab Nangl Dliangb* is a village in Zhouxi Township of Kaili City (凱里市舟溪鎮甘囊香), *Ghab Yif* is the Township of Taijiang (台江縣革一鄉), *Ghab Dongb* is a town in Jianhe County (劍河縣革東鎮).

A toponym is a kind of proper name which is inherently definite (Lyons 1999:21–22). Etymologically, common nouns function as a landmark of the place referred to. Take the village named
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Ghab Vangx Vib as an example: both the referent of the place name Ghab Vangx Vib and that of the common name vangx vib (rocky range) must be identifiable by the interlocutors.

This kind of place name normally has its own internal grammatical structure which is analyzable. Ghab Vangx Vib, for instance, contains a head vangx (range) with a nominal modifier vib (stone, rock); Ghab Det Dlenx contains a head noun det (tree) modified by a noun dlenx (peach); Ghab Lul Bangb contains a head lul (big bridge) and a verbal modifier bangb (fall down).

Ghab is relatively productive in the creation of new place names. I find that some rather new place names denoting the places surrounding the informants’ village, which all came into being after 1958, are made up of ghab, such as Ghab Jos (Jos ‘furnace’, built in 1958 during the Great Leap Forward), Ghab Cangb Kut (Cangb Kut ‘warehouse’, borrowed from local Chinese cāngkù 倉庫, also built in 1958), Ghab Ceik Seix Jib (Ceik Seix Jib ‘pump’, borrowed from local Chinese chōushuijī 抽水機, installed in 1966) and Ghab Seix Bangt (Seix Bangt ‘water pumping station’, borrowed from local Chinese shuībèng 水泵, set up in 1971).

3.3 Relative positioning

The referent of a place name must have its own spatial boundaries, which might be rather fuzzy for ordinary people. The fact that considerable place names exist that are composed of ghab and common names indicates that ghab has a very powerful function in positioning and definiteness. With an overtone of spatial definiteness, it has further lexicalized into expressions that denote relative positions of physical objects. For example, many names denoting parts of ‘a tree’ (det) and of ‘a dry field’ (las) are ghab-nominals, as in (41) and (42) respectively.

(41) ghab guf ‘the top’ ghab jil ‘branch’ ghab tiab ‘crotch’ ghab liab ‘twig’
ghab lob ‘foot’ ghab jongx ‘root’ ghab hniub ‘seed’ ghab lik ‘bark’
ghab nex ‘leaf’ ghab zend ‘fruit’ ghab bangx ‘flower’
ghab bax ‘lowest branch’

14 The issues are far from being so easy. Let us examine the following place names:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common noun</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jux liangs (bridge-roll)</td>
<td>Ghab Jux Liangs</td>
<td>the place where the little fallen bridge is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>det dlongx (tree-paulownia)</td>
<td>Ghab Det Dlongx</td>
<td>the place where the paulownia tree stands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mus hsaid (grind-rice)</td>
<td>Ghab Mus Hsaid</td>
<td>the place where the roller is located</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The village named Ghab Jux Liangs stands by a brook, and a stone arch bridge exists there that stretches over the brook. The fact is that the bridge existing now is the one rebuilt in 1968 but not the original fallen one. The referent of jux liangs (the little fallen bridge) in the village name Ghab Jux Liangs has disappeared; as a result, the phonetic form of jux liangs in the place name Ghab Jux Liangs can no longer evoke the image of the little fallen bridge in the ordinary mind because nobody can see it today. The same is true for the cases of Ghab Det Dlongx where the paulownia tree was cut in 1958, and of Ghab Mus Hsaid where the roller was abandoned and swept away by floods because of the appearance, after 1972, of rice milling machines. Consequently these place names only denote the places purely. I have found many Hmub place names that are the same as these during my investigation.

15 Bangx (flower) is found not to procliticize with ghab (but in a metaphorically extended sense it is optionally used, as (ghab) bangx dul (PRC flower fire) ‘spark’), and zend (fruit) not so often as other terms. It might be because the duration of existence of the referent is not long enough for the native speaker to conceptualize it as part of a tree.
(42) ghab gib las ‘angular part of a field’ ghab diongb las ‘middle part of a field’
ghab lob las ‘the lower part of a field’ ghab but las ‘the edge of a field’
ghab ghangb las ‘the part below a field’
ghab hndb liex las ‘the high part of a field’
ghab hxangb las ‘the raised path through a field’
ghab niangs las ‘the part of a field near the side of a hill’

Pointing out a part of an entity also means positioning a space. But the uniqueness and
identifiability in reference is lost, and as a result, its definiteness fades to the generic. Ghab nex
(PRc leaf) ‘leaf’ is of course part of ‘a tree’, but it can be any ‘leaf’ of any ‘tree’.

Whether a nominal takes ghab is cognitively or semantically constrained. It is important to note
that words denoting a whole entity cannot take ghab, and that only words denoting inalienable parts
can. The constraint is imposed by the in/alienability of the possessor–possessee pairs. According
to two features of conceptual distance (small→great) and of durability (permanent→temporary),
Gerner (2005:310) located a representative number of possessor–possessee pairs. According to my
own survey, a word that denotes a possessee of the prototypical pairs such as person–body part,
animal–body part, plant–plant part and object–part is a ghab-noun. Except plant–fruit/plant–leaves
pair, a word that refers to a possessee of all the pairs that denote a temporary relation such as
person–body substance, animal–body substance or person–social contact is a bare noun, though the
conceptual distance of these pairs is very small. It seems that the permanence of the possessing
pairs plays a crucial role.

Therefore, the relative positioning function of ghab can often be glossed as ‘the area (of
something)’s,’ as illustrated in (43a) with (43b):

(43) a. jil lob diangs (CL-foot-ladder) ‘a ladder’s lower part’
    laib lot (CL-mouth) ‘a mouth’
    laib diux (CL-door) ‘a door’

    b. ghab lob diangs (PRC-foot-ladder)
    ‘the ground where the ladder’s lower part stands’
    laib ghab lot (CL-PRC-mouth)
    ‘the mouth of something, which is a part of something’
    laib ghab diux (CL-PRC-door)
    ‘the door of something’

The NPs in (43a) denote the entities that can stand alone, while the counterparts in (43b) imply
that their referents are a part of something or closely bound to something larger. This distinction
can be further exemplified by comparing the NP jil lob diangs in (44) with the NP ghab lob diangs
in (45):

(44) a. Jil lob diangs lod yangx.
    CL foot ladder break PRF
    ‘The ladder’s foot has broken.’
b. *Ghab lob diangs lod yangx.  
Prc foot ladder break prf  
‘The ladder’s lower part (including the ground where the ladder stands) has broken.’

(45) Laib gangf niangb bet dei’s?  
Cl basin at place which  
‘Where is the basin?’

a. Niangb ghab diux mongd.  
At prc door med  
‘At the door there (between you and me).’

b. *Niangb laib diux mongd.  
At cl door med  
‘On top of/in the door.’

Why is (44a) acceptable but not (44b)? The reason is that Ghab lob diangs in (44b) implies that the lower part (foot) of the ladder (stair) is an immovable part of the house, while jib lob diangs in (44a) expresses ‘the ladder’s low part’ that can be movable and detached. Example (45a) sounds natural since ghab diux suggests that the door is part of the house including the floor where the basin can be put. Example (45b) is odd because the NP laib diux denotes the door itself, and it is impossible to place a basin on top of it.

The main semantic distinction between the ghab-nominal and the non-ghab nominal is that the latter refers only to an entity, while the former is meronymic: its referent is a component part of an unspecified whole. See further:

(46) a. Laib diux nongd ed not xus bix seix?  
Cl door 1prx cost how much money  
‘How much is this door?’ (in the market)

b. Laib ghab diux niangb bet dei’s?  
Cl prc door at where  
‘Where is the door?’ (part of a building)

(47) a. Ax gid hnab dail bat bangf jil ghab bab, dail bat  
Ng touch cl pig poss cl prc leg cl pig  
deit mongx!  
kick 2sg  
‘Don’t touch the pig’s leg, or it would kick at you!’
b. Ax gid hnab wil bangf jil bab bat, ib hxot wat
   NG touch 1SG POSS CL leg pig, otherwise dirty
   PRC
   ‘Don’t touch my pork leg, otherwise it’ll get dirty.’

c. *Ax gid hnab wil bangf jil ghab bab bat.
   NG touch 1SG POSS CL PRC leg pig
   ‘Don’t touch my legs of pig.’

Though the NP \textit{laib diux nongd} in (46a) denotes the entity of ‘this door’, that ‘door’ is not a component part of a building or something yet, and is apparently still in the market for sale. The door referred to by the NP \textit{laib ghab diux} in (46b) is part of a building. The NP \textit{jib ghab bab} in (48a) not only denotes ‘the pig’s leg’, but also implies ‘the leg’ is a part of the pig’s body; the NP \textit{jil bab bat} in (47b) lacks \textit{ghab}, and it means that ‘the leg of the pig’ is detached from the pig’s body and it is ‘my pork leg’ now. Example (47c) is ungrammatical as it would imply that the speaker has an animal body part.

More interesting is the case of \textit{det}, as illustrated in (48). \textit{Det} generally means ‘tree’ when it occurs without \textit{ghab}, but ‘stem, stalk, trunk’ when with \textit{ghab}: \textit{ghab} thus indicates a meronomy.

\begin{align*}
\text{(48) a. Dol det aib pud bangx yangx.} & \quad \text{CL-PL tree DST blossom flower PRF} \\
& \quad \text{‘Those trees have been in blossom.’} \\
\text{b. Dol ghab det aib ngas yangx.} & \quad \text{CL-PL stem/trunk DST dry PRF} \\
& \quad \text{‘Those stems/trunks have become dry.’} \\
\text{c. Dol det aib bangf dol ghab det gos gangb gik yangx.} & \quad \text{CL-PL tree DST POSS CL-PL trunk by insect bite PRF} \\
& \quad \text{‘The trunks of those trees have been eaten into by insects.’}
\end{align*}

From the discussion of examples (43) to (48), it follows that \textit{ghab} encodes a nominal as being part of something bigger (including a larger space), while the use of ordinary classifiers does not indicate meronymic relations. Besides, there is still a semantic distinction between \textit{ghab}-nominals and bare nominals, which will be further discussed in §4.

3.4 \textit{Ghab} as a natural kind or subcategory marker

From the stage of relative positioning, \textit{ghab} has developed into a subcategory marker in the context where the \textit{ghab}-nominal appears in juxtaposition with other nominals that can be
interpreted as natural kinds or subcategories. Relative positioning and subcategory marking share a similarity in semantic structure. Relative positioning is the division of a whole entity into parts or different spatial positions. A subcategory marker is to classify a hypernymic category into different subcategories. So, such a ghab-nominal also bears a meronymy to a hypernymic category and thus a sense of definiteness to some extent.16 See (49) and (50):

(49) Ghab nangx nongf ghab nangx, ghab det nongf ghab det, ax
PRC grass self PRC grass PRC tree self PRC tree NG
dios jus diel.
COP one kind
‘Grass is grass, trees are trees, (they) are not the same kind.’

(50) Bib sail Ghab Dux Ghab Nes lial lial hel.
1PL all PRC PRC all MD
‘We all are the people of Ghab Dux and Ghab Nes Groups.’

As discussed above, det (without ghab) means ‘tree’, ghab-det means ‘trunk, stem’, but in a contrastive context where ghab det is in juxtaposition with ghab nangx (grass), as in (49), it means ‘trees’, which expresses implicitly that the plant (the hypernymic concept) can be classified into two kinds (subconcepts): trees and grass. Example (50) reflects the division of the local Hmub (Hmongb/Hmiob) into two subgroups: Ghab Nes and Ghab Dux.17

A ghab-nominal in juxtaposition with other ghab-nominals expresses the meaning of the subcategories. But if it co-occurs with a classifier that is expected to convey a specific reference (with the classifier being the head of the construction), then the construction names a specific member of the kind denoted by the ghab-nominal. This can be exemplified in (51):

(51) Dail ghab bak ax gid mongl dib dol ghab mangs ghab
CL PRC man NG go beat CL PRC woman PRC
daib.
child.
‘A man should not bully women and children.’

Example (51) covertly classifies people into men, women and children according to age and gender. The Hmub words bak, mangs and daib respectively mean ‘father, a middle-aged man or a husband who has had children’, ‘mother, a middle-aged woman or a wife who has had children and

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17 The local Hmub believe that both they themselves and the neighboring peoples with the autonyms of Hmongb and Hmiob belong to the same group but different subgroups: they themselves are Ghab Nes and the other two are Ghab Dux (Hmongb, Hmiob and Hmub are cognates historically).
still at child-bearing age’, and ‘child’. When occurring with ghab, they denote three different groups, each of which shares these features respectively. When they co-occur with the classifiers dail and dol, the constructions express a specific reference meaning.

The same phenomenon is found in Ghaob Xongb (Hunan Province) and Hmiob (Kaiyang County, Guizhou Province). Ghaob can also be attached to nominal hosts referring to people, with a part/whole semantic relation, as illustrated below:

(52) a. Ghaob Xongb (PRC-Xongb) ‘the Xongb people’
     Ghaob Zhal (PRC-Han/Chinese/other) ‘the Han Chinese, or the other people’

b. ghaob mphak (PRC-woman) ‘woman’
   ghaob njengt (PRC-man) ‘man’

c. Ghaob Khad ‘the Khad Clan’
   Ghaob Ghwax ‘the Ghwax Clan’

(Yu 2011:29, transliterated from IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet ))

Example (52a) shows that Ghaob Xongb believe that the (local) people can be divided into two ethnic groups: Ghaob Xong (ourselves) and Ghaob Zhal (the others); (52b) indicates that human beings are made up of men and women according to gender; (52c) means in Ghaob Xongb there are 12 clans: Ghaob Khad, Ghaob Ghwax (the corresponding Chinese clan names they accepted are 石 and 麻 respectively), etc. Hmiob clan names also take ab, which is cognate with ghab in Hmub and ghaob in Ghaob Xongb:

(53) ab Ghid ab Ngul ab Cut
     ‘the Ghid Clan’ ‘the Ngul Clan’ ‘the Cut Clan’

(Taguchi 2008:125, transliterated from IPA)

Some of the ghab-nouns of this kind have undergone the process of lexicalization because they have become proper names and ghab cannot be separated from the proper noun when being used to express meronymic generic references such as Ghab Dux, Ghab Nes in Hmub, and Ghaob Xongb, Ghaob Zhal, Ghaob Khad and Ghaob Ghwax in Ghaob Xongb.

3.5 Ghab with numerals and classifiers

Ghab can also be added to numerals that are multiples of 10 (juf ‘ten’, bat ‘hundred’, hsangb ‘thousand’, wangs ‘ten thousand’, and hsuk ‘hundred million’) and singular classifiers (but not the plural classifier dol). Classifiers here include sortal classifiers that actualize shape boundaries of an object, and mensural classifiers that create shape boundaries. The compound ghab-classifier/numeral forms an NP on its own and expresses an abstract collective or measure concept. But the meaning of this numeral/classifier construction exhibits syntactic variations.

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18 Ab Ghid, ab Ngul and ab Cut are Hmiob clan names which adopted the Chinese surnames Xiǎo 肖, Zhāng 张 and Chén 陈 respectively.
The *ghab*-classifier/numeral phrase can be rendered as ‘in/by measure unit or numeral’ when it follows a verb as a resultative complement (54a), an adverbial adjunct of manner (54b–c), or an indirect object (54d). The topic/subject of this sentence type often denotes the whole, and the *ghab*-classifier/numeral phrase following the verb denotes a part of the whole.

(54) a. Nenk ngix nongd hveb ghab dleif, ghab ceib, ghab dongx ghaid ghab ghox?
    or PRC CL

‘Should this meat be cut into pieces, slices, blocks or small cubes?’

b. Mongx baib nenx jed, mongx baib ghab laib ghaid baib ghab bongl?
    give PRC CL-couple

‘You gave him/her cakes. Did you give him/her in single or two (couple)?’

c. Dol nes aib dax ghab mongl hak, ax dios jus dax ghab dail!
    CL-PL bird DST come PRC CL-flock MD NG COP LK come PRC CL-SG

‘Those birds did come here in a flock but not alone!’

d. Mongx baib nenx ghab juf ghaid ghab bat?
    2SG give 3SG ten or PRC couple hundred

‘Did you give him/her by ten or by hundred?’

The *ghab*-classifier construction often denotes a part of a whole which occurs as the topic of the sentence, as illustrated in (55) and (56):

(55) Dol lix aib, maix dol ghab laib dob eb maix dol ghab laib nil eb.
    CL-PL field DST have CL-PL PRC CL deep water have CL-PL PRC CL shallow water

‘For those paddy fields (far away), some are deep, and some are shallow.’

(56) Dol det id, maix dol ghab dail hvib maix dol ghab dail gal.
    CL-PL tree COG have CL-PL PRC CL tall have CL-PL PRC CL low

‘For those trees (absent here), some are tall and some are short.’
The *ghab*-classifier construction can also be used as the head of a possessive phrase whose possessor is the noun denoting the whole. See examples (57) and (58):

(57) Dol lix aib, bangf dol ghab laib yut niangb gid waix, dol ghab laib hlieb niangb gid dab.

upper CL-PL PRC CL big in/at/on side below

‘Of those paddy fields, the small slots are on the upper part (of the hill), the big ones are on the lower part (of the hill).’

(58) Dol det id, bangf dol ghab dail hvib not hxangt, dol ghab dail gal.

over CL-PL PRC CL low

‘Of all the trees, there are more tall ones than short.’

Ghab-numerals that are multiples of 10 become nouns by lexicalization, and denote count units of an amount of entities:

(59) Bib baib nenx bix seix, baib dol ghab juf ghaid dol ghab bat?

CL-PL PRC hundred

‘Should we give him the money in ten-yuan notes or one-hundred-yuan notes?’

(60) Dol bod nix mongd, maix dol ghab juf liangl, maix dol ghab bat liangl.

CL-PL PRC hundred CL

‘For those silver ball-shaped ingots (between you and me), some are ten tael, and some are a hundred tael in weight or value each.’

*Dol ghab juf* and *dol ghab bat* in (59) are rendered as ‘ten-yuan notes’ and ‘one-hundred-yuan notes’ respectively, which are parts of ‘our’ money, and ‘we’ may have both ten-yuan notes and one-hundred-yuan notes in hand for ‘us’ to choose. Similarly in (60), *dol ghab juf liangl* refers to ‘the ten-tael ingots’, and *dol ghab bat liangl* ‘the one-hundred-tael ball-like ingots’. Such an interpretation is accepted only in the context where the *ghab*-numeral/CL is preceded by the plural classifier *dol* or by a numeral and a classifier.

A *ghab*-numeral that is a multiple of 10 also expresses an approximate number:

(61) Nenx zaid dax ghab juf dail khat.

3SG family come PRC ten CL guest

‘About ten guests visited his family.’
Defu Shi

(62) Laib dangx maix ghab hsangb laix naix.
   CL playground exist PRC thousand CL person
   ‘There are about a thousand people on the playground.’

(63) Bib baib nenx dol ghab wangs kaix nix.
   1PL give 3PL PRC ten thousand CL silver
   ‘We gave them about ten thousand yuan.’

Two neighboring ghab-numerals in juxtaposition express vague numbers as in (64) and (65):

(64) Laib dangx maix ghab hsangb ghab wangs laix
   CL playground exist PRC thousand PRC ten thousand CL
   naix.
   person
   ‘There are thousands, tens of thousands of people on the playground.’

(65) Bib baib nenx dol ghab hsangb ghab bat kaix nix.
   1PL give 3PL PRC thousand PRC hundred CL silver
   ‘We gave them hundreds, thousands of yuan.’

If articulated with an accent on ghab, the ghab-numeral expression that is a multiple of 10 expresses a big round number. It contrasts with the expression in which ghab is substituted by the quantifier xuk ‘little’, yielding xuk-numeral, which denotes a small vague number (see Chen 2003:594).\(^{19}\) Compare sentences (a) and (b) below:

(66) Dail leif not xus bix seix haib?
    still be left how much money MD
    ‘How much money is still left?’

   a. Ghab bat kaix haib.
      PRC hundred yuan MD
      ‘About a hundred yuan.’ (It’s a lot.)

   b. Xuk bat kaix heb yangx.
      PRC hundred yuan MD PRF
      ‘Just a hundred yuan.’ (It’s a little bit.)

\(^{19}\) Chen (2003:594) wrote xuk as suk, while it comes out as hxuk in Yuliang, as hsuk in Jinbao.
(67) a. Wil dot ghab hsangb laib yangx. Ax gid baib wil yel.
   1 SG get PRC thousand CL PRF NG give 1 SG yel.
   ‘I’ve got (about) a thousand singles. Don’t give me any more.’

   b. Wil dot xuk hsangb laib heb. Dail baib xuk nenk haib.
   1 SG get PRC thousand CL MD still give PRC nenk haib.
   ‘I’ve only got a thousand singles. Please just give a little bit more.’

The nuance between (66a) and (66b) involves subjective judgments: the former conveys an optimistic perspective on the value encoded in a numeral while the latter is from a pessimistic perspective. The same holds for (67a) and (67b). It sounds as if the ghab-numeral and the xuk numeral make an augmentative/diminutive pair. (For further discussion of augmentative and diminutive, see Jurafsky 1996.)

Furthermore, the ghab-numeral that is a multiple of 10 expresses that the number is larger than expected when ghab is strongly stressed:

(68) Das ghab bat laix, mongb ghab hsangb laix, die PRC hundred CL ill PRC thousand CL
    zuk ghab wangs laix.
    run PRC ten thousand CL
    ‘(Over) a hundred people died, (over) a thousand became ill, and (over) ten thousand fled.’

3.6 Summary

From the discussion above, we have an idea of the functions of ghab, which is constrained by its complementary context. Together with locative verbs or prepositions, ghab-nominals often express spatial definiteness. A ghab-nominal often denotes a referent which is part of an entity, while a referent which is not part of an entity is referred to by a non-ghab noun. In juxtaposition with other subcategory nouns, a ghab-nominal often denotes a member of a category. Collocated with a singular classifier or numeral that is a multiple of 10, the ghab-classifier or numeral phrase expresses a count unit. This can be illustrated through the morpheme det ‘tree’ as in (69):
Defu Shi

(69) dol det ‘trees’
   CL-PL tree
Ghab Det Mangx ‘the place where the maple tree stands’ (toponym)
PRC tree maple
dol ghab det gad-wangx ‘corn stalks/stems’ (relative positioning)
CL-PL PRC det corn
ghab nangx ghab det ‘grass and trees’ (subcategory marker)
PRC grass PRC tree
ghab det zend ‘the fruit of a whole tree’ (measural unit)
PRC CL-tree fruit

4. Further distinction between ghab-noun and bare noun

A ghab-noun and a bare noun also exhibit a significant difference in meaning.

In Hmub, the proclitic ghab is often added to a nominal element when the element is the head of a nominal phrase, as in (70) and (71), and, on the other hand, omitted when the nominal element modifies another nominal head, as in (70’) and (71’):

(70) a. laib ghab dlad (CL-PRC-waist) ‘a waist’
    b. *laib dlad (CL-waist)

(70’) a. jox hxek dlad (CL-belt-waist) ‘a waist belt sash’
    b. *jox hxed ghab dlad (CL-belt-PRC-waist)

(71) a. laib ghab vud (CL-PRC-forest) ‘a forest’
    b. *laib vud (CL-forest)

(71’) a. dail gheib vud (CL-chicken-wild) ‘a wild chicken’
    b. *dail gheib ghab vud (CL-chicken-PRC-forest)

A reasonable explanation for this phenomenon is that a ghab-nominal refers to the concrete entity of its referent, whereas a bare noun does not. In other words, the former is referential while the latter is non-referential. This claim can be evidenced by comparing (70) with (70’), and (71) with (71’). The nominal element dlad (waist) in (70) that takes the head slot of the NP is a ghab-nominal since it must be referential in the context where it serves as the nominal head; on the other hand, the nominal element dlad (waist) in (70’), which serves just as a modifier of the NP, is not attached with ghab because, as a modifier, it is not necessary to be referential. The same applies to (71) and (71’).

Another interesting phenomenon is found in VO phrases: some direct object nominals are attached to ghab while some others are not, as in (72)–(74).
(72) a. cob ghab nex (blow-PRC-leaf) ‘blow the/a leaf/leaves’
    b. cob nex (blow-leaf) ‘play a tune on leaf’

(73) a. mongb ghab diub (ill/pain-PRC-back) ‘have a back pain’
    b. mongb diub (ill/pain-back) ‘suffer from back pain’

(74) a. niangb ghab dab (sit-PRC-ground/earth) ‘sit on the ground’
    bit ghab dab (lie-PRC-ground/earth) ‘lie on the ground’
    b. niangb dab (sit-ground/earth) ‘sit down’
    bit dab (lie-ground/earth) ‘lie down’

In these examples, the ghab-nominals, serving as direct objects, are referential, while their counterpart bare nouns are non-referential, or serving in the manner of the preceding verb as in (72b), or as the direction of its preceding verb as in (74b). Morphologically, the ghab-nominals in (a) are not bound to the preceding verbs while the bare nouns in (b) are bound to the preceding verbs. Therefore, the ghab-NPs in (72a) and (74a) serve as patient roles, while the non-ghab NPs in (73b) and (75b) serve as instrumental and directional roles respectively. Ghab diub in (73a) refers to the ‘back’ which is in pain, whereas diub in (73b) is non-referential, but just expresses that the discomfort is related to the back. Niangb dab in (74b) is just a dynamic word, with dab as a dynamicizer which makes the stative verb niangb ‘sit’ dynamic.

A further observation supports this analysis. In the VO structure, a ghab-nominal object may occur with a nominal classifier or a numeral nominal classifier phrase, which has functions of classification and individualization (Bisang 1999), while a bare nominal cannot, as illustrated in (75), (76) and (77) respectively, as contrasting with (72), (73) and (74).

(75) a. Cob liul ghab nex nongd.
    blow CL PRC leaf PRX
    ‘Blow this leaf.’

    b. *Cob liul nex nongd.
    blow CL leaf PRX

(76) a. Mongb laib ghab diub.
    ill/pain CL PRC back
    ‘I suffer from back pain.’

    b. *Mongb laib diub.
    ill/pain CL back
The gháb NPs in the above examples can have classificatory or individualizing functions, while their counterparts cannot. The reason is that the gháb-nouns refer to concrete entities which can be classified or individualized, whereas their counterparts are non-referential and therefore cannot be classified or individualized.

In summary, semantically a gháb-noun is referential whereas a bare noun is non-referential; morphologically, a gháb-noun is independent, and a bare noun is somewhat bound and even lexicalized with its predicative verbal element.

5. Similarities and differences between the functions of gháb and ab

The above discussion reveals that both ab and gháb are multifunctional. I shall try to summarize all the previous points about ab and gháb and spell out their similarities and differences.

Ab is a definite proclitic which is attached to personal names and kinship terms, and also serves as a nominalization marker. Ghab is not productive in a nominalization process, but some clues suggest that it used to be productive. First, a small number of nouns co-occur with verbs and the proclitic gháb, and signal definiteness. They contrast with the classifier laib which conveys indefiniteness in this context, as in (78a–c):

(78) a. ded eb (block-water) ‘to block water (by building a dam)’
   > gháb ded eb ‘the dam, the water bar’
   > laib ded eb ‘a dam, a water bar’

b. lix diux (latch-door) ‘to latch a door’
   > gháb lix diux ‘the latch of the door’
   > laib lix diux ‘a latch’

c. mes laib wil (cover-CL-pot) ‘to cover the/a pot’
   > gháb mes wil ‘cover, lid’

These few nouns might be a relic of the function of nominalization of gháb.

Second, its parallel cognate forms ghàoib in Ghaob Xongb, ab [ʔa^] in Kaiyang Ab Hmiob and ghv [qv] in Jiading Ghongb Hmongb still actively display their nominalization function:
(79)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmub</th>
<th>Zaiji</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zanb [tsɛ́³⁵]</td>
<td>‘to drill’ &gt; ghaob zanb [qo³⁵ tse³⁵]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghwex [qwe⁴²]</td>
<td>‘to punch’ &gt; ghaob ghwex [qo³⁵ qwe⁴²]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rout [zʊ³⁵]</td>
<td>‘near’ &gt; ghaob rout [qo³⁵ zʊ³⁵]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ras [zɑ³¹]</td>
<td>‘sharp, clever’ &gt; ghaob ras [qo³⁵ zɑ³¹]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Shi 1986:64–65. For more details, see Xiang 1999:43 and Yu 2011:103)

(80)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmub</th>
<th>Zaiji</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rus [zuC]</td>
<td>‘to chisel’ &gt; ab rus [ʔaA zuC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>got [koC]</td>
<td>‘to saw’ &gt; ab got [ʔaA koC]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nplox [mploA]</td>
<td>‘to whip’ &gt; ab nplox [ʔaA mploA]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zenb [tsenA]</td>
<td>‘to cut with scissors’ &gt; ab zenb [ʔaA tsenA]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Taguchi 2008:71–73, transliterated from IPA)

(81)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmub</th>
<th>Zaiji</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nangd [nɑŋ¹³]</td>
<td>‘foolish’ &gt; qhngd nangd [qoŋ¹³ noŋ¹³]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kewx [khu⁵⁵]</td>
<td>‘thin’ &gt; ghwex kewx [qu⁵⁵ khu⁵⁵]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drongs [tʰʊ²²]</td>
<td>‘fat’ &gt; ghongl drongs [qoŋ¹¹ tʰʊ²²]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nblongx [mploŋ⁵⁵]</td>
<td>‘mad’ &gt; ghongl nblongx [qoŋ³¹ mploŋ⁵⁵]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Yue 1979:200)

Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that the Hmub ghab used to be a nominalization marker just as ab is today.

Ghab is multi-functional, which can be characterized in the following way: (i) spatial definiteness, (ii) toponym, (iii) relative positioning of an entity, (iv) subcategory marking, (v) partitive expression and (vi) emphasis of the referent itself. For the first five functions, they are correlated and bundled by a common and crucial function: creating boundaries. Spatial definiteness and place naming means creating geographical boundaries; relative positioning means creating boundaries within a concrete entity; subcategory marking is to create abstract boundaries of a hypernym category; and partitive expression is to create quantity boundaries of an amount. For the ghab-NPs that bear spatial definiteness, there are also some differences among them:

(82)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ghab + common noun</th>
<th>place name with ghab</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>general spatial definiteness</td>
<td>inherent definiteness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the perspective of evolution, some ghab-NPs have undergone a process of lexicalization and others have not. The ghab-NPs in §3.2–§3.4 are all lexicalized, whereas those in §3.1 and most of those in §3.5 are not. (The lexicalized items are bound to their heads so closely that they are inseparable from the m.) Maybe this is the reason why Guan (2006) argues that ghaob behaves both as a prefix and an article.
6. The phonetic split of proto-Hmub *ghab [qa^A]

There are three forms, namely ab, ghab and ghad, found to co-exist in different Hmub dialects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Xijiang</th>
<th>Yanghao</th>
<th>Yuliang</th>
<th>Zhouxi</th>
<th>Kaitang</th>
<th>Taipan</th>
<th>Jinbao</th>
<th>Bao’en</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>地名</td>
<td>西江</td>
<td>廠蒿</td>
<td>魚糧</td>
<td>舟溪</td>
<td>凱棠</td>
<td>台盤</td>
<td>金堡</td>
<td>報恩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghab</td>
<td>ghab</td>
<td>ghab</td>
<td>ghab</td>
<td>ab</td>
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<td>ghad</td>
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<td>ghad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dialect of Xijiang Township, Leishan County (雷山縣西江鎮), a county neighboring Kaili, has only one form ghab that has the functions of ab and ghab in Yuliang, which I shall present in §6.1. The dialect of Hmub in Kaili, Majiang and Huangping (as in Yuliang and Zhouxi) has two forms ghab and ab coexisting, as discussed above. The dialect of Taipan, Geyi of Taijiang (台江縣台盤鄉.革一鄉) and Kaitang of Kaili (凱里市凱棠鄉) has three forms ab, ghab and ghad. The dialect of Bao’en Village of Taigong Township of Taijiang (台江縣台拱鎮報恩村), Jinbao of Zhenyuan (鎮遠金堡鄉), has the forms ghab and ghad, but has no ab.

I propose that all the co-existent forms split from the same proto-Hmub *ghab. The proposal will be discussed by comparing ab and ghab in Yuliang with other counterparts in some other Hmub dialects.

6.1 Ghab in Xijiang

In this section, I first present the functions of ghab in Xijiang, then explore the issue of whether ab and ghab in Yuliang split from proto-Hmub *ghab, or the ghab in Xijiang is a merger of proto-Hmub *ab and *ghab.

6.1.1 The functions of ghab in Xijiang

Ghab in Xijiang is found to have the functions of both ab and ghab in Yuliang. The ghab-nominals in Yuliang take ghab in Xijiang, and the ab-nominals in Yuliang also take ghab in Xijiang, as illustrated below (examples (83–85a) are from Yuliang and (83–85b) from Xijiang):

(83) a. Ab Lix nas ab Vongx dax yangx.
    PRC NMM LK PRC NMM come PRF

b. Ghab Lix haib ghab Vongx dax jaix.
[qa^-1 li^2 he^-1 qa^-1 yon^-2 ta^-2 te^-2]
    PRC NMM LK PRC NMM come PRF

‘Lix and Vongx have been here.’
(84) a. **Ab** wub mongl khangd deis mongl yangx?

PRC granny go where DIR PRF

b. **Ghab** wuk mol hangd dos mol jaix?

[qa \( ^1 \) vu \( ^7 \) mo \( ^4 \) haŋ \( ^3 \) to \( ^6 \) mo \( ^4 \) ʨe \( ^7 \) ]

PRC granny go where DIR PRF

‘Where has our grandmother gone?’

(85) a. **Ab** liax ax des mongx ait ib gid dax?

PRC lame NG follow 2SG together come

b. **Ghab** liax max des mongx ait eeb geed dax?

[qa \( ^1 \) la \( ^2 \) ma \( ^2 \) to \( ^5 \) mon \( ^2 \) e \( ^5 \) e \( ^1 \) ke \( ^3 \) ta \( ^2 \) ]

PRC lame NG follow 2SG together come

‘That lame one didn’t come together with you?’

Personal names in (83), kinship terms in (84) and adjectives in (85) take **ab** in Yuliang, while all the counterparts in Xijiang take **ghab**. This indicates that **ghab** in Xijiang has the functions of both **ab** and **ghab** in Yuliang.

6.1.2 Merger or split

There are two assumptions for the phenomenon just discussed above: merger and split. The merger assumption is that there were two proto-Hmub forms *ab* [a\(^A\)] and *ghab* [qa\(^A\)], and the present form **ghab** in Xijiang is a merger of *ab* and *ghab* through phonetic fortition or morphological analogy. In contrast, the split assumption supposes that there was only one proto-Hmub form *ghab*, and that it later split into **ab** and **ghab** in Yuliang. I shall discuss these two assumptions below.

6.1.2.1 Merger through phonetic fortition

There is a possibility that the **ghab** in Xijiang is the merger of two proto-Hmub forms *ghab* and *ab* through phonetic fortition. This possibility is likely only if **ab** is stressed. But the fact is that **ghab** and **ab** are both weak (light) syllables (Chen 1993:7), except for the context in which **ghab** is attached to a classifier or a numeral. Proclitic **ab** (or **ghab**) and its following host form a prosodic unit in which the proclitic is pronounced more weakly than its host. For instance, **ghab** nex (PRC-leaf) ‘leaf’ is pronounced as [qa \( ^{33} \) nou \( ^{55} \)], **ab** Bangx (PRC-NMF) as [a \( ^{33} \) paŋ \( ^{55} \)]. This fact renders the process of phonetic fortition (ab \( > > \) ghab) impossible but the process of phonetic lenition (ghab \( > > \) ab) possible.
6.1.2.2 Merger through morphological analogy

There is another possibility that the *ghab in Xijiang is the merger of *ghab and *ab through morphological analogy. (This means that I assume Xijiang had two proclitics ab and ghab in the past as Yuliang does today.) This possibility is likewise unlikely for the following reasons:

(i) It is well known that similarity between the analogue and the target is a necessary condition for analogy to happen. But I find, in the discussion above, that ghab and ab share only one similarity, namely definiteness and nominalization, and that the differences in functions and semantics between them are much more than the similarities they share.

(ii) Ab could only change to ghab by morphological analogy if ghab were more productive in those languages that have both forms. But the fact is that ab is far more productive than ghab in nominalization, as seen above.

(iii) The animacy scale ranks humans above animals, then plants, natural forces, concrete objects and abstract objects. To substitute ab with ghab means that humans are classified as inanimate objects since the ghab-nominal is inanimate and the ab-nominal is human. Demoting humans to inanimate objects obviously violates the animacy scale.

(iv) The change from voiceless uvular gh [q] into voiceless glottal Ø [ʔ] is a strong tendency in Miao languages. In the Pingle Village of Sankeshu Township of Kaili (凱里市三棵树鎮平樂村) and the villages of Longtang and Langde of Leishan County (雷山縣龍塘村和朗德村), for instance, the Hmub official orthography gh comes out as Ø [ʔ]. To the best of my knowledge no counterexamples that ghab changed from ab have been found so far, and this can be explained typologically. Gh [q] is a marked consonant which is neither found across a wide range of different languages nor learned early by children, while glottal Ø [ʔ], as pointed out by Hopper & Traugott (2003:155), is unmarked. The evolution in phonology from a marked phonetic segment to an unmarked one is normal. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that ab merges into ghab.

6.1.2.3 Split for semantic refinement

The split assumption would be true if and only if it is the case that: (i) I can prove that the proto-Hmong (Miao) had a proclitic *ghab that could be attached to human nouns and inanimate nouns, that had roughly the same meanings or functions as ab and ghab in Yuliang do; and that (ii) I can provide a reason for why it split in Hmub.

The assumption that the Proto-Hmong had a proclitic *ghab can be proved as follows:

(i) Ab and ghab in Yuliang both express definiteness but they are in complementary distribution semantically: ab occurs with human nouns and ghab with inanimate nouns. This fact supports the assumption that they came from the same proto-form.

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20 The phrase Ab ghet ghangt ghangx ‘(Our) grandfather is shouldering’ is pronounced as ab et angt angx [ʔa\(^1\) ʔa\(^5\) ʔa\(^3\) ʔa\(^2\)] in Longtang. This datum results from the author’s personal elicitation in the area.
(ii) The cognate forms in some other Miao languages can occur with both human and inanimate nouns. It is clear that *ghab has changed into ab in Yejipo Ab Hmiob and Shimenkan Ab Hmaob through lenition since these two Miao languages lack ghab but have ab [ʔa¹].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Dananshan</th>
<th>Shimenkan</th>
<th>Yejipo</th>
<th>Wopuzhai</th>
<th>Jiading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>地名</td>
<td>大南山</td>
<td>石門鑑</td>
<td>野雄坡</td>
<td>高浦寨</td>
<td>甲定</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghab/ab</td>
<td>ab</td>
<td>ab</td>
<td>ab</td>
<td>ab</td>
<td>ghv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main parts of the autonym of Shimenkan and Yejipo, for instance, are attested to be cognates with their counterparts in other Miao languages (Wang 1994:14, 64), but the preposed bound element is ab while its counterparts in other Miao languages are ghab, ghongb or ghaob respectively (Fengxiang and Jiading data from my fieldnotes):

(86) Fengxiang       Jiading        Layiping       Shimenkan
    Ghab Hmongb      Ghongb Hmongb    Ghaob Xongb    Ab Hmaob

Yejipo
Ab Hmiob

In the Wopuzhai Ab Hmiob of Kaiyang County of Guizhou (贵州省關陽縣高浦鄉高浦寨), ab [ʔa¹] can occur with both animate and non-animate nominals as in (87), and be used to nominalize verbs or adjectives as human and instrumental nouns, as in (88):

(87) a. ab bad [ʔa¹ pa⁶⁶] ‘father’      ab mis [ʔa¹ mi⁶⁶] ‘mother’
     ab dangb [ʔa¹ tan⁶⁶] ‘son’        ab gud npek [ʔa¹ ku⁶⁶ mphe⁷⁷] ‘son’s daughter’

b. ab vens [ʔa¹ ven⁶⁶] ‘board’      ab rongx [ʔa¹ zoŋ⁶⁶] ‘door’
     ab renl [ʔa¹ zen⁶⁶] ‘side room’   ab teb [ʔa¹ the⁶⁶] ‘staircase’

(88) a. nbyongx [mpzọŋ⁶⁶] ‘mad’        ab nbyongx [ʔa¹ mpzọŋ⁶⁶] ‘mad person’
     nbux [mpu⁶⁶] ‘foolish’          ab nbux [ʔa¹ mpu⁶⁶] ‘fool’
     wad [ʔwa⁶⁶] ‘dumb’            ab wad [ʔa¹ ʔwa⁶⁶] ‘dumb person’
     dos mas [dō⁶⁶ ma⁶⁶] ‘blind’     ab dos mas [ʔa¹ dō⁶⁶ ma⁶⁶] ‘blind person’

b. rus [zu⁶⁶] ‘to chisel’        ab rus [ʔa¹ zu⁶⁶] ‘chisel’
     got [ko⁶⁶] ‘to saw’           ab got [ʔa¹ ko⁶⁶] ‘saw’
     nplox [mplo⁶⁶] ‘to whip’      ab nplox [ʔa¹ mplo⁶⁶] ‘whip’
     zenb [tsen⁶⁶] ‘to cut with scissors’ ab zenb [ʔa¹ tsen⁶⁶] ‘scissors’

(Taguchi 2008:71–73, transliterated from IPA)

The Ab Hmaob form can occur with both human and inanimate nouns as well (Wang 2005):
In Dananshan Hmong, both *ab* and *ghab* can be used to nominalize adjectives as human nouns as in (90a) and (90b), and can occur with non-animate nouns as in (90c):

(90) a. hlob ‘old, big’ > ghab hlob ‘the old, the grown’
yout ‘young, small’ > ghab yout ‘the young, child’

b. loul ‘old’ > ab loul ‘old person, the old’
hluak ‘young’ > ab hluak ‘the youth, the young’

c. ab hlit ‘the moon’ = ghab hlit ‘the moon, one whole month’
ab zhot ‘rice steamer’ = ghab zhot ‘rice steamer, a whole rice steamer of’
ab hnob ‘the sun’ = ghab hnob ‘the sun, one whole day’

(Li 1992:62; Luo & Yang 2004:46–47)

Li (1992) and Luo & Yang (2004) point out that *ab* in Hmong split from *ghab*, and that *ab* has developed new meanings since the split.

The Jiading Hmongb cognate form [qv13/31] can be used as nominalizer for both human and inanimate nouns:

(91) a. nangd [nŋ13] ‘foolish’ > qhangd nangd [qŋ13 nŋ13] ‘fool; foolish person’
kewx [khɛ 55] ‘thin’ > ghewx kewx [q 55 khɛ 55] ‘the thin; thin person’
drongs [tɔŋ 22] ‘fat’ > ghongl drongs [qɔŋ 31 tɔŋ 22] ‘the fat; fat person’
nblongx [mplɔŋ 55] ‘mad’ > ghongl mplongx [qŋ31 mplɔŋ 55] ‘the mad; mad person’

b. said [sɛ 13] ‘to cut with scissors’ > ghaid said [qɛ 13 sɛ 13] ‘scissors’
nbes [mpɔ 22] ‘to cover’ > ghed nbes [qɔŋ 13 mpɔ 22] ‘(the) cover’
hstut [ʃu 43] ‘to file’ > ghud hstut [q 13 ʃu 43] ‘(the) file’

(Yue 1979:200)

From all the facts presented above, I can draw the conclusion that the proto-Hmong (Miao) had a proclitic *ghab* which could be attached to human nouns and inanimate nouns, and that it has split into *ghab* and *ab* in Yuliang Hmub. But what is the reason why it split in Hmub? Here are the answers.
The first reason is that the speakers of the language want to make the meanings of a lexical item finer. Lexical form split (or divergence in Hopper’s term) is a normal way in which the meanings of a word are made finer in the process of lexical development, especially grammaticalization (Chen 2000; Heine & Reh 1984:57–59; Hopper 1991:22; Hopper & Traugott 2003:118–122). Old English (c. 600 to 1152) numeral *an ‘one, a certain’, for instance, split into three forms in accordance with the different contexts in present English: the stressed numeral *one [wən] de-stressed articles *a [ə] and *an [ən] when followed by a vowel (Hopper & Traugott 2003:119). The middle Chinese word 爾 ‘you’ split into two style forms in present Mandarin: *nǐ 你 and *ér 父 (Wang 1990:70). An interesting example in Hmub is provided here, which is motivated by grammaticalization. Khand ‘cave, hole’ extends a new meaning ‘place’ metonymically (which indicates that the ancestral Hmong were a cave-dwelling people),21 then is grammaticalized as a nominalizer of adjectives. The following synchronical local varieties of Hmub (or Central Miao) demonstrate the stages of splitting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(92)</th>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Cave/hole</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Nominalizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuliang</td>
<td>conservative</td>
<td>khandg</td>
<td>khandg</td>
<td>khandg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinbao</td>
<td>transitional</td>
<td>khandg</td>
<td>khandg/hangd</td>
<td>khandg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bao’en</td>
<td>completed</td>
<td>khandg</td>
<td>hangd</td>
<td>hangd</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Bao’en, its onset kh [qh] is neutralized into an unmarked form h [h] when it is a nominalizer or a noun meaning ‘place’. So the erstwhile lexical form khandg has split into two, a stressed khandg and a reduced hangd in Bao’en.

The second reason, which is crucial and essential, is that the split of *ghab into ghab and ab is motivated by the animacy rank. There is a strong tendency of lexical split that is motivated by animacy rank in Yuliang Hmub, which will be systematically exemplified below. Two proto-Hmong (Miao) lexical forms, reconstructed as *mriD and *praB, denote ‘mother, female animal’ and ‘father, male animal’ respectively (Shi 2010:50). Their lexical forms and meanings remain the same in some western Miao languages such as Dananshan Hmongb, but in Yuliang and some other Hmub dialects the proto-forms, *mriD and *praB, have split in two, with *mriD becoming mif and mib, and *praB becoming bad and bak. The split forms refer to ‘mother’ and ‘father’, the original forms ‘female animal’ and ‘male animal’ respectively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(93)</th>
<th>Original form</th>
<th>Split form</th>
<th>Original form</th>
<th>Split form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dananshan</td>
<td>naf ‘mother, female’</td>
<td>mib ‘mother’</td>
<td>zid ‘father, male’</td>
<td>bak ‘father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuliang</td>
<td>mif ‘female’</td>
<td>mib ‘mother’</td>
<td>bad ‘male’</td>
<td>bak ‘father’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 This claim can be supported by the following facts: (i) the cognate forms, khandg in Hmub (Zhang & Xu 1990:272), khaod in Hmongb (Xian 2000:135–136), khud in Ghaob Xongb (R. Shi 1997:331), all have the same meanings ‘cave, hole’ and ‘place’. (ii) Khandg qut (cave-bed) in Hmub and khaod qeut (cave-bed) in Hmongb both mean ‘address, living place’; the literal meaning is ‘a cave where there are beds’. (iii) The sentence ‘Where are you going?’ is rendered as Mongx mongl khandg deis? (2sg-go-cave-which) in Hmub, and Gox mongl khaod dus? (2sg-go-cave-which) in Hmongb, both of which are literally interpreted as ‘Which cave are you going to?’
Another example occurred later, only within Hmub. Wuk ‘grandmother, old woman’ in Yanghao and other Hmub dialects, but split into wuk ‘old woman’ and wub ‘grandmother’ in Yuliang. It is worth noting that all the split forms above have become kinship terms and the original forms are animal or common nouns. Likewise, the split new form ab occurs with human nouns (including kinship terms) and the original form ghab with inanimate nouns. So it is plausible to conclude that the split of ab from ghab is motivated by the promotion of human status in animacy rank.

The split of ab from ghab occurs not in Hmub alone, but in Gundong ʻԌᇀ’ Ba’hng as well. In Ba’hng, according to Chen (1993), [qa 33] occurs more often with animate nouns (animals and plants) than inanimate, and [ʔa 33], in contrast, with non-animate nouns more than animate:

This fact shows that [ʔa 33] split from qa 33 conditioned by animate/inanimate hosts in Ba’hng, but in a different direction from Hmub where ab occurs with animate nouns and ghab with inanimate nouns. The split process has not been completed yet in Ba’hng since there are still a small number of cases where qa 33 is also attached to non-animate nouns, as in qa 33 tau11 ‘fire’, qa 33 po33 ‘bracelet’.

Based on the above facts, a conclusion can be drawn: the conservative form ghab in Xijiang represents the proto-Hmub form; ab in Yuliang is split from *ghab, yielding the coexistence of ab and ghab, with ab coding definiteness solely into human nominals, while ghab bears the other functions.

### 6.2 The distribution of ghab, ghad and ab in Bao’en and Taipan

In this section, I shall investigate the distribution of ghab, ghad and ab in Bao’en before probing into their origin.

#### 6.2.1 Ghab, ghad and ab in Bao’en

Bao’en Hmub has two proclitics ghab and ghad, but no ab (see Ji 2012). Ghab is attached to inanimate nouns as in Yanghao and Yuliang, see (95), but ghad is attached to singular classifiers (phrased) or numerals, which is significantly different from Yuliang and Yanghao; see (96).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(94)</th>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Plant</th>
<th>Inanimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qa 33 ljan42 ‘dog’</td>
<td>qa 33 tsau44 ‘hot pepper’</td>
<td>qa 33 na33 ‘bristlegrass’</td>
<td>qa 33 la55 ‘mouth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qa 33 no 35 ‘turtledove’</td>
<td>qa 33 ne35 ‘cogongrass’</td>
<td>qa 33 ji44 ‘comb’</td>
<td>qa 33 tan11 ‘neck’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qa 33 nheic31 ‘ant’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chen 1993:7)

(95) Yanghao Yuliang Bao’en

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ghab nangx</th>
<th>ghab niangx</th>
<th>ghab naix</th>
<th>(PRC-grass)</th>
<th>‘grass’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ghab nex</td>
<td>ghab nex</td>
<td>ghab nongx</td>
<td>(PRC-leaf)</td>
<td>‘leaf’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghab mongl</td>
<td>ghab mongl</td>
<td>ghab mul</td>
<td>(PRC-sleeve)</td>
<td>‘sleeve’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ghab but</td>
<td>ghab bet</td>
<td>ghab bongt</td>
<td>(PRC-side)</td>
<td>‘side of’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6.2.2 The distribution of ghab, ghad and ab in Taipan

Three forms, ab, ghab and ghad, are found in Taipan, Geyi and Kaitang. To the west of this area, ab and ghab are found but not ghad; and to the east of this area, ghab and ghad are found but not ab. In other word, ab occurs with human nominals as in Yuliang, but ghad can also go with singular classifiers or numerals, and ghab has the same function as in Bao’en.

6.2.3 The origin of ghab and ghad

I justify my claim that ghad in Bao’en is split from *ghab in Yuliang with the following three facts:

First, ghab and ghad in Bao’en are semantically in complementary distribution: ghad occurs with classifiers and numerals, and ghab with other inanimate nouns.

Second, the functions of the two proclitics ghab and ghad in Bao’en are just the same as those of the proclitic ghab in Yuliang.

Finally, a comparison with counterparts in other Miao languages shows that ghad split from ghab:

Example (97) shows that the forms in other Hmub varieties and Ghaob Xongb all fall into the first tone, except for Bao’en. The cognate form in Dananshan Hmongb also falls into the first tone valued\(^43\) (Li 1992:62, transcribed from IPA into orthography) as ghab hlit (PRC CL-month) ‘a whole month’ and ghab drot maud (PRC CL-\(\text{食べ物}\) food) ‘a whole barn of rice’.

The reason for the split is to transparentize the semantic opacity of ghab. Ghab in Yuliang is multi-functional or polysemous, as discussed above. This semantic opacity inevitably makes a heavy burden of construing for the hearer. Ghab teb eb (PRC-cylinder-water), for instance, can be interpreted either as ‘the water cylinder’ or ‘a cylinder bucket full of water’. In other words, teb can be construed as either a nominal head or a classifier. In order to transparentize the opacity, Bao’en
Defu Shi

changes the tone of the *ghab* preceding a classifier into the third tone, leaving the tone of the *ghab* preceding a noun unchanged. So I have the following distinction in Bao’en (examples 98(a–d) are nouns, and their counterparts (a’–d’) phrases):

(98) a. ghab tongb ongb  
    PRC cylinder water  
    ‘the water cylinder’

b. ghab jil dongt zaid  
    PRC branch tree fruit  
    ‘branch of fruit tree’

c. ghab zad  
    PRC house  
    ‘family, (the) house’

d. ghab dongt zaid  
    PRC tree fruit  
    ‘the trunk of fruit tree’

a’. ghad tongb ongb  
    PRC CL-cylinder water  
    ‘a cylinder full of water’

b’. ghad jil dongt zaid  
    PRC CL-branch tree fruit  
    ‘a branch full of fruit’

c’. ghad zad nax  
    PRC CL-house people  
    ‘a house full of people’

d’. ghad dongt zaid  
    PRC CL-tree fruit  
    ‘a tree full of fruit’

Ab is split from the proto-Hmub *ghab* as discussed in §6.1.2. But the *ab*-nominals in Yuliang are rendered as bare nominals in Bao’en. Compare Bao’en with Yuliang:

(99) Bao’en     Yuliang

a. Wuk bib wil laib zaid. Ab wub baib wail laib jangd.
    grandma give 1SG CL fruit PRC grandma give 1SG CL fruit
    ‘Grandma gave me a fruit.’

    NMM at home PRC NMM at home
    ‘Bod is at home.’

c. Ob ghet niangb zad. Ab ghet niangb jid.
    1 dual-inclusive grandpa at home PRC grandpa at home
    ‘Our grandpa is at home.’
When elders are respectfully talked about, a postposed appositive phrase signaling respect is added to the kinship term, as *nax lul* (person-old) in Bao’en and *dail lul* (CL-old) in Yuliang:

(100) Bao’en

Ghet *nax lul* niangb zad. Ab ghet *dail lul* niangb jid.

grandpa person old at home PRC grandpa CL old at home

‘grandfather, the elder’

‘(Our) grandpa, the elder, is at home.’

It seems that Bao’en has lost *ab* in the process of grammaticalization (also see Wang 1986:29). As Hopper & Traugott (2003:172) point out, ‘…at the extreme end of the history of a particular form as a grammatical marker we may find loss, either of form alone or occasionally of both form and function’.

### 6.3 Summary

From a synchronic perspective, I find that: (i) Xijiang has only *ghab* that serves all the functions discussed above; (ii) Yuliang has *ab* and *ghab* which separate the functions into two parts; (iii) Taipan has three: *ab*, *ghab* and *ghad* which divide the functions into three; and (iv) Bao’en has two forms *ghab* and *ghad* and has lost *ab*. From a diachronic perspective, four stages of the evolution of proto-Hmub *ghab* can be suggested as follows. (For the geographical relationship between the four places, see Appendix B at the end of the paper.)

(101)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; <em>ab</em></td>
<td>&gt; <em>ab</em></td>
<td>&gt; loss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ghab</em></td>
<td>&gt; <em>ghab</em></td>
<td>&gt; <em>ghad</em></td>
<td>&gt; <em>ghad</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xijiang</td>
<td>Yuliang</td>
<td>Taipan</td>
<td>Bao’en</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example (101) indicates that Xijiang is the most conservative, Bao’en is the most innovative, and Yuliang and Taipan are at different transitional stages.

### 7. Conclusion

*Ab* and *ghab*, from the same proto-Hmub root *ghab*, have the function of definiteness, although this function of *ghab* has bleached in some contexts. Thus it would be more reasonable to treat them as proclitics rather than prefixes. This is because in some cases they are not a component part of a noun and in some contexts *ghab* gets a hyper-stress. From the stage of definiteness, proclitic *ghab* develops several semantic features: relative positioning, subcategory marking and partitive expression. *Ghab*-NPs highlight the physical concreteness of their referents, and often, though not always, contain an implicit semantic meronymy. Non-*ghab*-NPs are non-referential, and just convey the relevance of the referents.
The proclitic *ab* expresses familiarity and is attached to personal names as in Greek, where an article co-occurs with personal names such as *ho Sōkratēs* ‘Socrates’ (Lyons 1999:22), but is unlike English in which the definite article is forbidden.

The synchronic cline of *ghab* discussed above is correlated with the degrees or ways of grammaticalization and lexicalization. These semantic properties of *ghab* are complex and elusive, but in essence the key functions can be explored. As Lyons (1999:275) points out, ‘… the correspondence between a grammatical category and the category of meaning it is based on is never one-to-one’, but that, in the case of grammaticalization of definiteness, ‘… there is a … central core of uses relatable directly to indefiability’ (Lyons 1999:278).
Appendix A: Map of Miao languages

Central Miao (Hmub/Ghab Nes):
Yanghao Village, Sankeshu Township, Kaili City, Guizhou Province (貴州省凱里市三康鄉揚寨村)

Eastern Miao (Ghaob Xongb):
Layiping Village, Jiwei Township, Huayuan County, Hunan Province (湖南省花垣縣吉衛鄉裏坪村)
Aizhai Village, Aizhai Township, Jishou City, Hunan Province (湖南省吉首市矮寨鎮矮寨村)
Changxing Township, Songtao County, Guizhou Province (貴州省松桃縣長興鎮)

Western Miao:
Dananshan Village, Yanzikou Township, Bijie County, Guizhou province (Hmongb) (貴州省畢節市黔西縣大南山村)
Shimenkan Village, Zhongshui Township, Weining County, Guizhou Province (Ab Hmaob) (貴州省威寧縣中水鎮石門艦村)
Yejipo Village, Xiangjiao Township, Fuquan City, Guizhou Province (Ab Hmiob) (貴州省福泉市仙江鄉野雞坡村)
Wopuzhai Village, Gaozhai Township, Kaiyang County, Guizhou Province (Ab Hmiob) (貴州省開陽縣高寨鄉高坡寨村)
Fengxiang Village, Chong'an Township, Huangping County, Guizhou Province (Ab Hmongb) (貴州省黃平縣重安鎮楓香村)
Jiading Village, Gaopo Township, Huaxi District, Guiyang City, Guizhou Province (Ghongb Hmongb) (貴州省貴陽市花溪區高坡鎮甲定村)
Baituo Village, Qingyan Township, Huaxi District, Guiyang City, Guizhou Province (Hmongb) (貴州省貴陽市花溪區青岩鎮壩托村)
Appendix B: Map of Hmub dialects (Central Miao)

Yanghao Village, Sankeshu Township, Kaili City (凱里市三板溪鎮陽和村)
Kaitang Township, Kaili City (凱里市凱棠鄉)
Zhouxi Township, Kaili City (凱里市舟溪鄉)
Pingle Village, Sankeshu Township, Kaili City (凱里市三板溪鎮平樂村)
Yuliang Village, Wanshui Township, Kaili City (凱里市萬水鎮魚棲村)
Xijiang Township, Leishan County ( 雷山縣西江鎮)
Langde Township, Leishan County ( 雷山縣朗德鎮)
Bao’en Village, Taigong Township, Taijiang County ( 台江縣台拱鎮寳恩村)
Geyi Township, Taijiang County (台江縣貴一鄉)
Taipan Township, Taijiang County (台江縣台盤鄉)
Chong’an Township, Huangping County ( 黃平縣重安鎮)
Geddong Township, Jianhe County (劍河縣革東鎮)

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Defu Shi

本文試圖對黔東苗語名詞或名詞短語的前附著詞 ab 和 ghab 進行詳細的描寫。Ab 附著於人名、親屬稱謂和形容詞的前面，是一個專司於人的有定標記。與 ghab 結合的結構展現一系列相互關係的語義相似特徵：空間有定指、有語義描述和定的名（有定指）、實體的空間部位劃分、根據事物特性進行的抽象分類和數量的有界化。附加 ghab 的名詞若非附加 ghab 的名詞具有區別：前者的所指往往是整體的一個部分，隱含一種部分-整體的語義關係；後者的所指沒有必要是整體的一個部分。帶 ghab 的名詞往往是有指稱的，不帶 ghab 的名詞則是無指稱的，類似英語短語 go to the school（去學校）/ the hospital（去醫院）和 go to school（去學校）/ hospital（去看病）之間區別。

關鍵詞：黔東苗語，定指，無定指，詞彙化，名詞分類