

The Functions of Proclitic *Ab* and *Ghab* in Hmub*

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

Defu Shi

Minzu University of China



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,¹ 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,

* 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:

b [p]	p [ph]	m [m]	hm [m̥h]		f [f]	hf [fh]	w [v]				
d [t]	t [th]	n [n]	hn [n̥h]	z [ts]	c [tsh]	s [s]	hs [sh]	r [z]	dl [ʈ]	hl [ʈh]	l [l]
di [t̪]	ti [t̪h]	ni [n̪]	hni [n̪h]	j [tɕ]	q [tɕh]	x [ɕ]	hx [ɕh]	y [ʐ]	dli [ʈj]	hli [ʈjh]	li [lj]
g [k]	k [kh]	ng [ŋ]					hv [xh]	v [ʎ]			
gh [q]	kh [qh]										
∅ [ʔ]						h [h]					

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

Autonym:	Ghaob Xongb	Hmub	Hmong	AbHmaob
Village:	Layiping	Yanghao	Dananshan	Shimenkan
地名：	臘乙坪	養蒿 ²	大南山	石門檻
Miao Branch:	Eastern Miao	Central Miao	Western Miao	Western Miao
Non-animate	qɔ ³⁵	qa ³³	qa ⁴³ /a ⁴³	a ⁵⁵
Animate (human)	ɑ ³⁵	a ³³	a ⁴³ /qa ⁴³	a ⁵⁵
Autonym:	Ab Hmiob	Ghab Hmongb	Ghongb Hmongb	Hmongb
Village:	Yejipo	Fengxiang	Jiading	Baituo
地名：	野雞坡	楓香	甲定	擺托
Miao Branch:	Western Miao	Western Miao	Western Miao	Western Miao
Non-animate	a ^{33/31}	qa ^{33/31}	qv ^{13/31}	a ^{33/55}
Animate (human)	a ^{33/31}	a ³³	qv ^{13/31}	

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 (貴州省凱里市三棵樹鎮); 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 (貴州省威寧縣中水鎮); 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).

(ii) Rimes of Hmub: i [i] ai [ɛ] e [ə] a [a] o [o] u [u] ei [ei] en [en] ang [aŋ] ong [oŋ]

(iii) Tones of Hmub:

Proto Tones	A		B		C		D	
Tones	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th
Writing system	b	x	d	l	t	s	k	f
Values	33	55	35	22	44	13	53	31

The 4th and 6th tones are breathy.

² Yanghao does not have the proclitic a³⁵ (ad) but a³³ (ab); a³⁵ (ad) is a noun, meaning ‘sister’ (see Zhang & Xu 1990:1 for details). The form of the proclitic in Dananshan should be qa⁴³ (qhab) but not qo⁴³, 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.³ 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 *qa^A. 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,⁴ 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.

³ But the frequency of *ghab/ghaob* in languages or dialects is highly different (Chen 1993:4). According to Guan (2006), 9.6% of the words in the *Miao–Chinese and Chinese–Miao Dictionary* (R. Shi 1997) take *ghaob*. According to my statistics, about 6% of words in the *Miao–Chinese Dictionary—Hmub Dialect* (Zhang & Xu 1990) take *ghab*; only 25 words in the *New Miao–Chinese Dictionary* (Xian 2000) take *ghab* or *ab*.

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:

<i>Ab</i> (§2)	<i>Ghab</i> (§3)
–Person nouns	–Common nouns
–Adjectival phrases	–Classifiers
–Certain intransitive verb phrases	–Numerals that are multiples of ten
	–A few verb phrases

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* 們, 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 阿(*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 (Yu 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 (鐘山) 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

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 (韋名應, Zhongshan Zhuang, Yunnan Nationalities University); and Xuechun Wei (韋學純, Shui, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences).

⁶ It is reflected as *aib* [e¹] 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; PRF 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.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| (1) | Aib | Jenb | Aib | Lix | Aib | Nax | Aib | Nil |
| | 埃 | 金 | 埃 | 禮 | 埃 | 娜 | 埃 | 妮 |
| | PRC | NMM | PRC | NMM | PRC | NMF | PRC | NMF |

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

C. Wang (1986:29) glosses *aib* as 埃, although the Chinese character 埃 [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. | a ³³ | bun ²⁴ | li ³³ | bie ³³ | khi ⁵³ | tau ³³ | wi ²⁴ ? | |
| | | 阿 | 文 | 你 | --- | 去 | 哪裡 | | |
| | | PRC | NMM | 2SG | will | go | where | | |
| | | 'Where are you going, a=Wen?' | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | b. | a ³³ | | bun ²⁴ | | khi ⁵³ | tau ³³ | wi ²⁴ | a ³³ ? |
| | | 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.' | | | | | | | | | |

- (5) Wil jus deix mongb hvib ab Saib Xongt maf naix.
 1SG really hate PRC NMM kill person
 ‘We really hate Saib Xongt, the murderer.’
- (6) Ab Jux yis diuk mongd diangd dax yangx.
 PRC NMM by_{passive} knife MED again come PRF
 ‘That Jux who should be killed with knife has been here again!’
- (7) Ab Nix dios dail naix lax naix hangt.⁸
 PRC NMM COP CL person rotted person foul
 ‘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* [qa^A] (see §6), while the Chinese 阿(*a=*) 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》爲「烏何切」) 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:

- (8) a. Wil zaid ghet ax niangb zaid yangx.
 1SG POSS grandfather NG at home PRF
- b. *Wil zaid ab ghet ax niangb zaid yangx.
 1SG POSS PRC grandfather NG at home PRF
 ‘My grandfather is not at home (now).’

⁸ Example (7) is provided by Shiren Xu (許仕仁), from the Yanghao Village, Sankeshu Township, co-author of the *Miao–Chinese Dictionary*.

- (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

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?
 PRC Chairman Mao COP when born
 '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!
 NG look down 1SG MD
 'Don't look down upon me!'
- b. Ax gid ngangt ax dot ab Nix nongd leif!
 NG look down PRC NMM 1PRX MD
 '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.'¹⁰

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?
 PRC mother go where DIR PRF
 'Where has (our) mother gone?'
- (15) Ab ghet mongl gid deis mongl yangx?
 PRC grandpa go where DIR PRF
 'Where has (our) grandpa gone?'

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 ghangb. 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 *ab* are grammatical. Those in (23b) sound quite odd because *ab* in this context means ‘our (inclusive)’, which clashes with the possessive determiner (see §2.3).

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 | |
| | | 1SG | POSS | NMF | | 3SG | POSS | NMM | |
| | b. | wil | zaid | ab | Vob | nenx | zaid | ab | Nix |
| | | 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 *zaid* in (24a) is often phonetically weakened (see below), while it is not in (24b).

Ab is obligatorily attached to the head when the head is an adjective as illustrated below:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|---------------------------------|------|--------|--------|--------------------------------------|------|---------|---------|
| (25) | a. | *wil | zaid | vas | | *nenx | zaid | niat | |
| | | 1SG | POSS | clever | | 3SG | POSS | foolish | |
| | b. | wil | zaid | ab | vas | nenx | zaid | ab | niat |
| | | 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, *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 *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 mɛ ¹³]	[vi: ²²⁻³⁵ mɛ 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 qə ⁴⁴]	[nen ⁵⁵⁻³⁵ qə ⁴⁴]	his/her grandfather
ab Hof zaid wuk	[a ³³ ho ³¹ tse ³⁵ vu ⁵³]	[a ³³ ho ³¹⁻³⁵ vu ⁵³]	Hof's grandmother
wil zaid ab vas	[vi: ²² tse ³⁵ a ³³ ɣa ¹³]	[vi: ²²⁻³⁵ a ³³ ɣa 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 b. laib lix aib
 paddy field DST CL paddy field DST
 ‘that paddy’ ‘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 demonstrative 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’ b. *bet* aib ‘there/that place’
 place DST place DST

- (33) a. *ob khangd aib
two place DST
'those two places'
- b. ob bet aib
two CL DST
'those two places'
- (34) a. ob laib khangd aib
two CL cave DST
'those two caves'
- b. *ob laib bet aib
two CL place DST
'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
PRC door DST
'the door there'
- b. *ob ghab diux aib
two PRC door DST
'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):

- (38) Mongx niangb jil kent bet nend ait laib xid?
 2SG at CL basket place 2PRX do CL what
 ‘What are you doing there where the basket lies?’

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 <i>lusheng</i> playground is |
| diuk (a kind of bamboo) | Ghab Diuk | the place where there is bamboo |
| lul hsub(bridge-chain) | Ghab Lul Hsub | 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 Hsub*, a place name in Chong’an Township of Huangping (黃平縣重安鎮鏈子橋). 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

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 *chōushuǐjī* 抽水機, installed in 1966) and *Ghab Seix Bangt* (*Seix Bangt* 'water pumping station', borrowed from local Chinese *shuǐbèng* 水泵, set up in 1971).¹⁴

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',¹⁵ *ghab bax* 'lowest branch'

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

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

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 hfud 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 deis?
 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 deis?
 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 h nab wil bangf jil bab bat, ib hxot wat
 NG touch 1SG POSS CL leg pig, otherwise dirty
 niOX.
 PRC
 ‘Don’t touch my pork leg, otherwise it’ll get dirty.’
- c. *Ax gid h nab wil bangf jil ghab bab bat.
 NG touch 1SG POSS CL PRC leg pig
 ‘Don’t touch my legs of pig.’

Though the NP *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 *laib ghab diux* in (46b) is part of a building. The NP *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 *jil bab bat* in (47b) lacks *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 *det*, as illustrated in (48). *Det* generally means ‘tree’ when it occurs without *ghab*, but ‘stem, stalk, trunk’ when with *ghab*: *ghab* thus indicates a meronymy.

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

From the discussion of examples (43) to (48), it follows that *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 *ghab*-nominals and bare nominals, which will be further discussed in §4.

3.4 *Ghab* as a natural kind or subcategory marker

From the stage of relative positioning, *ghab* has developed into a subcategory marker in the context where the *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

¹⁶ In Miao languages, a ‘four-syllable idiom’ with coordination relation often expresses a hypernymic concept (see the gloss of Yu 2004 for Ghaob Xongb). Hmub examples: *ghab diux ghab zaid* (PRC door PRC house) ‘house property’, *ghab waix ghab dab* (PRC sky PRC earth) ‘the universe’, *ghab xangf ghab hxot* (PRC time PRC spare) ‘spare time’.

¹⁷ The local Hmub believe that both they themselves and the neighboring peoples with the autonoms 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).

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. Nenx ngix nongd hveb ghab dleif, ghab ceib, ghab dongx
 CL meat 1PRX cut PRC CL PRC CL PRC CL
 ghaid ghab ghox?
 or PRC CL
 ‘Should this meat be cut in(to) pieces, slices, blocks or small cubes?’
- b. Mongx baib nenx jed, mongx baib ghab laib ghaid
 2SG give 3SG cake 2SG give PRC CL-SG or
 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
 CL-PL bird DST come PRC CL-flock MD NG COP
 jus dax ghab dail!
 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 PRC ten or PRC 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
 CL-PL field DST have CL-PL PRC CL deep water have
 dol ghab laib nil eb.
 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
 CL-PL tree COG have CL-PL PRC CL tall have CL-PL
 ghab dail gal.
 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
 CL-PL field DST POSS CL-PL PRC CL small in/at/on side
 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
 CL-PL tree COG POSS CL-PL PRC CL tall much/many
 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
 1PL give 3SG money give CL-PL PRC ten or
 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
 CL-PL ingot silver MED have CL-PL PRC ten CL have
 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.’

(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
 1SG get PRC thousand CL PRF NG give 1SG
 yel.
 MD
 ‘I’ve got (about) a thousand singles. Don’t give me any more.’
- b. Wil dot xuk hsangb laib heb. Dail baib xuk
 1SG get PRC thousand CL MD still give PRC
 nenk haib.
 CL MD
 ‘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):

(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	<u>liul</u>	ghab	nex	nongd.
		blow	CL	PRC	leaf	PRX
						‘Blow this leaf.’
	b.	*Cob	<u>liul</u>	nex	nongd.	
		blow	CL	leaf	PRX	
(76)	a.	Mongb	<u>laib</u>	ghab	diub.	
		ill/pain	CL	PRC	back	
						‘I suffer from back pain.’
	b.	*Mongb	<u>laib</u>	diub.		
		ill/pain	CL	back		

- (77) a. Niangb bet ghab dab nongd.
 sit CL PRC ground PRX
 ‘Sit on this piece of ground.’
- b. *Niangb bet dab nongd.
 sit CL down PRX

The *ghab* NPs in the above examples can have classificatory or individualizing functions, while their counterparts cannot. The reason is that the *ghab*-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 *ghab*-noun is referential whereas a bare noun is non-referential; morphologically, a *ghab*-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 *ghab* and *ab*

The above discussion reveals that both *ab* and *ghab* are multifunctional. I shall try to summarize all the previous points about *ab* and *ghab* 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 *ghab*, 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)’
 > ghab ded eb ‘the dam, the water bar’
 > laib ded eb ‘a dam, a water bar’
- b. lix diux (latch-door) ‘to latch a door’
 > ghab lix diux ‘the latch of the door’
 > laib lix diux ‘a latch’
- c. mes laib wil (cover-CL-pot) ‘to cover the/a pot’
 > ghab mes wil ‘cover, lid’

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

Second, its parallel cognate forms *ghaob* in Ghaob Xongb, *ab* [ʔa^ʔ] in Kaiyang Ab Hmiob and *ghv* [qv] in Jiading Ghongb Hmongb still actively display their nominalization function:

- (79) zanb [tse³⁵] ‘to drill’ > ghaob zanb [qo³⁵ tse³⁵] ‘drill’
ghwex [qwe⁴²] ‘to punch’ > ghaob ghwex [qo³⁵ qwe⁴²] ‘fist’
rout [zɯ⁵⁴] ‘near’ > ghaob rout [qo³⁵ zɯ⁵⁴] ‘surroundings’
ras [zɑ³¹] ‘sharp, clever’ > ghaob ras [qo³⁵ zɑ³¹] ‘idea, cleverness’
(Shi 1986:64–65. For more details, see Xiang 1999:43 and Yu 2011:103)

- (80) rus [zu^C] ‘to chisel’ > ab rus [ʔa^A zu^C] ‘chisel’
got [ko^C] ‘to saw’ > ab got [ʔa^A ko^C] ‘saw’
nplox [mplo^A] ‘to whip’ > ab nplox [ʔa^A mplo^A] ‘whip’
zenb [tsen^A] ‘to cut with scissors’ > ab zenb [ʔa^A tsen^A] ‘scissors’
(Taguchi 2008:71–73, transliterated from IPA)

- (81) nangd [nɑŋ¹³] ‘foolish’ > qhngd nangd [qɑŋ¹³ nɑŋ¹³] ‘fool’
kewx [khu⁵⁵] ‘thin’ > ghewx khewx [qu⁵⁵ khu⁵⁵] ‘the thin’
drons [toŋ²²] ‘fat’ > ghongl drongs [qoŋ³¹ toŋ²²] ‘the fat’
nblongx [mplon⁵⁵] ‘mad’ > ghongl mplongx [qoŋ³¹ mplon⁵⁵] ‘the mad’
(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) partive 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)

<i>ghab</i> + common noun	place name with <i>ghab</i>
general spatial definiteness	inherent definiteness

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.

Village	Xijiang	Yanghao	Yuliang	Zhouxi	Kaitang	Taipan	Jinbao	Bao'en
地名	西江	養蒿	魚糧	舟溪	凱棠	台盤	金堡	報恩
	<i>ghab</i>	<i>ghab</i> <i>aib</i>	<i>ghab</i> <i>ab</i>	<i>ghab</i> <i>ab</i>	<i>ghab</i> <i>ab</i> <i>ghad</i>	<i>ghab</i> <i>ab</i> <i>ghad</i>	<i>ghab</i> <i>ghad</i>	<i>ghab</i> <i>ghad</i>

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.
 [qa¹ li² he¹ qa¹ yon² ta² tɕɛ²]
 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?
 [qa¹ vu⁷ mo⁴ haŋ³ to⁶ mo⁴ tɕe²]
 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?
 [qa¹ la² ma² tə⁶ moŋ² ε⁵ e¹ ke³ ta²]
 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^ʌ] and **ghab* [qa^ʌ], 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 [qa³³ nou⁵⁵], *ab Bangx* (PRC-NMF) as [a³³ paŋ⁵⁵]. 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 \emptyset [ʔ] is a strong tendency in Miao languages. In the Pingle Village of Sankeshu Township of Kaili (凱里市三棵樹鎮平樂村) 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 \emptyset [ʔ].²⁰ 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 \emptyset [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.

²⁰ The phrase *Ab ghet ghangt ghangx* '(Our) grandfather is shouldering' is pronounced as *ab et angt angx* [ʔa¹ ʔa⁵ ʔaŋ⁵ ʔaŋ²] 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 Yejipto Ab Hmiob and Shimenkan Ab Hmaob through lenition since these two Miao languages lack *ghab* but have *ab* [ʔa¹].

Village	Dananshan	Shimenkan	Yejipto	Wopuzhai	Jiading
地名	大南山	石門檻	野雞坡	窩浦寨	甲定
	Ghab/ab	ab	ab	ab	ghv

The main parts of the autonym of Shimenkan and Yejipto, 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
Ghab Hmongb | Jiading
Ghongb Hmongb | Layiping
Ghaob Xongb | Shimenkan
Ab Hmaob |
| | Yejipto
Ab Hmiob | | | |

In the Wopuzhai Ab Hmiob of Kaiyang County of Guizhou (貴州省開陽縣高寨鄉窩浦寨), *ab* [ʔa^A] 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 [ʔa ^A pa ^B] | ‘father’ | ab mis [ʔa ^A mi ^C] | ‘mother’ |
| | | ab dangb [ʔa ^A taŋ ^A] | ‘son’ | ab gud npek [ʔa ^A ku ^C mphe ^D] | ‘son’s daughter’ |
| | b. | ab vens [ʔa ^A ven ^C] | ‘board’ | ab rongx [ʔa ^A zoŋ ^A] | ‘door’ |
| | | ab renl [ʔa ^A zən ^B] | ‘side room’ | ab teb [ʔa ^A the ^A] | ‘staircase’ |
| (88) | a. | nbyongx [mpzoŋ ^A] | ‘mad’ > ab nbyongx [ʔa ^A mpzoŋ ^A] | | ‘mad person’ |
| | | nbux [mpu ^A] | ‘foolish’ > ab nbux [ʔa ^A mpu ^A] | | ‘fool’ |
| | | wad [ʔwa ^B] | ‘dumb’ > ab wad [ʔa ^A ʔwa ^B] | | ‘dumb person’ |
| | | dos mas [ðo ^C ma ^C] | ‘blind’ > ab dos mas [ʔa ^A ðo ^C ma ^C] | | ‘blind person’ |
| | b. | rus [zu ^C] | ‘to chisel’ > ab rus [ʔa ^A zu ^C] | | ‘chisel’ |
| | | got [ko ^C] | ‘to saw’ > ab got [ʔa ^A ko ^C] | | ‘saw’ |
| | | nplox [mplo ^A] | ‘to whip’ > ab mplox [ʔa ^A mplo ^A] | | ‘whip’ |
| | | zenb [tsen ^A] | ‘to cut with scissors’ > ab zenb [ʔa ^A tsen ^A] | | ‘scissors’ |

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

The Ab Hmaob form can occur with both human and inanimate nouns as well (Wang 2005):

- (89) a. [ʔa⁴⁴ bho²⁴] ‘woman’ [ʔa⁴⁴ t̥ha³³] ‘young man’
 [ʔa⁴⁴ po⁵⁵] ‘old woman’ [ʔa⁵⁵ zœy³³] ‘grandfather’
 [ʔa⁵⁵ mau²¹] ‘elder brother’ [ʔa⁴⁴ lau⁴⁴] ‘old person’
- b. [ʔa⁴⁴ t̥ʂɿ⁵⁵] ‘body’ [a⁴⁴ ŋu⁵⁵] ‘intestine’
 [a⁴⁴ mbfiə²⁴] ‘ear’ [ʔa⁴⁴ dlfiəu²⁴] ‘door’
 [ʔa⁴⁴ t̥zi²¹] ‘branch’ [ʔa⁴⁴ lo³³] ‘mouth’

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 [qv^{13/31}] can be used as nominalizer for both human and inanimate nouns:

- (91) a. nangd [nɑŋ¹³] ‘foolish’ > qhangd nangd [qɑŋ¹³ nɑŋ¹³] ‘fool; foolish person’
 kewx [khu⁵⁵] ‘thin’ > ghewx khewx [qwu⁵⁵ khu⁵⁵] ‘the thin; thin person’
 drongs [toŋ²²] ‘fat’ > ghongl drongs [qoŋ³¹ toŋ²²] ‘the fat; fat person’
 nblongx [mploŋ⁵⁵] ‘mad’ > ghongl mplongx [qoŋ³¹ mploŋ⁵⁵] ‘the mad; mad person’
- b. said [sɛ¹³] ‘to cut with scissors’ > ghaid said [qɛ¹³ sɛ¹³] ‘scissors’
 nbes [mpə²²] ‘to cover’ > ghed nbes [qə¹³ mpə²²] ‘(the) cover’
 hsut [shu⁴³] ‘to file’ > ghud hsut [qu¹³ shu⁴³] ‘(the) file’
 hsaib [she²⁴] ‘new’ > ghail hsaib [qɛ³¹ she²⁴] ‘new object; something new’
 (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* [wʌn] 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 *ěr* 爾 (Wang 1990:70). An interesting example in Hmub is provided here, which is motivated by grammaticalization. *Khangd* '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:

(92)	Dialect	Stage	Cave/hole	Place	Nominalizer
	Yuliang	conservative	khangd	khangd	khangd
	Jinbao	transitional	khangd	khangd/hangd	khangd
	Bao'en	completed	khangd	hangd	hangd

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 *khangd* has split into two, a stressed *khangd* 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 **mri^D* and **pra^B*, 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, **mri^D* and **pra^B*, have split in two, with **mri^D* becoming *mif* and *mib*, and **pra^B* becoming *bad* and *bak*. The split forms refer to 'mother' and 'father', the original forms 'female animal' and 'male animal' respectively:

(93)		Original form	Split form	Original form	Split form
	Dananshan	naf 'mother, female'		zid 'father, male'	
	Yuliang	mif 'female'	mib 'mother'	bad 'male'	bak 'father'

²¹ This claim can be supported by the following facts: (i) the cognate forms, *khangd* 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) *Khangd 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 khangd 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 (滾董) Ba’hng as well. In Ba’hng, according to Chen (1993), [qa³³] occurs more often with animate nouns (animals and plants) than inanimate, and [ʔa³³], in contrast, with non-animate nouns more than animate:

(94)	Animal	Plant	Inanimate
	qa ³³ ljaŋ ⁴² ‘dog’	qa ³³ tɕau ⁴⁴ ‘hot pepper’	ʔa ³³ la ⁵⁵ ‘mouth’
	qa ³³ ŋo ³⁵ ‘turtledove’	qa ³³ na ³³ ‘bristlegrass’	ʔa ³³ ji ⁴⁴ ‘comb’
	qa ³³ ŋhei ³¹ ‘ant’	qa ³³ ŋe ³⁵ ‘cogongrass’	ʔa ³³ ŋaŋ ¹¹ ‘neck’
			(Chen 1993:7)

This fact shows that ʔa³³ split from qa³³ 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 qa³³ is also attached to non-animate nouns, as in qa³³ tau¹¹ ‘fire’, qa³³ 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).

(95)	Yanghao	Yuliang	Bao’en		
	ghab nangx	ghab niangx	ghab naix	(PRC-grass)	‘grass’
	ghab nex	ghab nex	ghab nongx	(PRC-leaf)	‘leaf’
	ghab mongl	ghab mongl	ghab mul	(PRC-sleeve)	‘sleeve’
	ghab but	ghab bet	ghab bongt	(PRC-side)	‘side of’

(96)			Yanghao	Yuliang	Bao'en
	Laib	CL	ghab laib	ghab laib	ghad lab
	Laix	CL	ghab laix	ghab laix	ghad lax
	Juf	ten	ghab juf	ghab jef	ghad juf
	Bat	hundred	ghab bat	ghab bat	ghad beet
	Hsangb	thousand	ghab hsangb	ghab hsiub	ghad hsangb

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*:

(97)		Sortal-CL	Measural-CL	ten	hundred	thousand	ten thousand
	Bao'en	qa ³ lai ¹	qa ³ tɕaŋ ¹	qa ³ tɕu ⁸	qa ³ pjɛ ⁵	qa ³ shaŋ ¹	qa ³ vaŋ ⁶
	Yanghao	qa ¹ le ¹	qa ¹ tɕaŋ ¹	qa ¹ tɕu ⁸	qa ¹ pa ⁵	qa ¹ shaŋ ¹	qa ¹ vaŋ ⁶
	Yuliang	qa ¹ lai ¹	qa ¹ tɕaŋ ¹	qa ¹ tɕəu ⁸	qa ¹ pa ⁵	qa ¹ shu ¹	qa ¹ vu ⁶
	Layingping	qo ¹ le ¹	qo ¹ kaŋ ¹	qo ¹ ku ⁸	qo ¹ pa ⁵	qo ¹ tshɛ ¹	qo ¹ wɛ ⁶
	Songtao	qɣ ¹ le ¹	qɣ ¹ kaŋ ¹	qɣ ¹ ku ⁸	qɣ ¹ pa ⁵	qɣ ¹ tshæ ¹	qɣ ¹ wæ ⁶

(Songtao data are from Luo, 2005, Layingping from Xiang, 1999)

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 valued⁴³ (Li 1992:62, transcribed from IPA into orthography) as *ghab hlit* (PRC CL-month) 'a whole month' and *ghab drot maud* (PRC CL-甕 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

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* 'the water cylinder'
 PRC cylinder water
- b. *ghab* *jil* *dongt* *zaid* 'branch of fruit tree'
 PRC branch tree fruit
- c. *ghab* *zad* 'family, (the) house'
 PRC house
- d. *ghab* *dongt* *zaid* 'the trunk of fruit tree'
 PRC tree fruit
- a'. *ghad* *tongb* *ongb* 'a cylinder full of water'
 PRC CL-cylinder water
- b'. *ghad* *jil* *dongt* *zaid* 'a branch full of fruit'
 PRC CL-branch tree fruit
- c'. *ghad* *zad* *nax* 'a house full of people'
 PRC CL-house people
- d'. *ghad* *dongt* *zaid* 'a tree full of fruit'
 PRC CL-tree 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.'
- b. Bod niangb zad. Ab Bod niangb jid.
 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. Yuliang
 grandpa person old at home PRC ghet **dail lul** niangb jid.
 'grandfather, the elder' CL old at home
 '(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)
- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 |
| | > ab | > ab | > loss |
| *ghab | > ghab | > ghad | > ghad |
| | | > ghab | > ghab |
| Xijiang | Yuliang | Taipan | Bao'en |

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 (貴州省凱里市三棵樹鎮養蒿村)

Eastern Miao (Ghaob Xongb):

Layingping Village, Jiwei Township, Huayuan County, Hunan Province (湖南省花垣縣吉衛鄉臘乙坪村)

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) (貴州省畢節市燕子口鎮大南山村)

Shimenkan Village, Zhongshui Township, Weining County, Guizhou Province (Ab Hmaob) (貴州省威寧縣中水鎮石門檻村)

Yejiapo Village, Xianqiao Township, Fuquan City, Guizhou Province (Ab Hmiob) (貴州省福泉市仙橋鄉野雞坡村)

Wopuzhai Village, Gaozhai Township, Kaiyang County, Guizhou Province (Ab Hmiob) (貴州省開陽縣高寨鄉窩浦寨)

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鄉甲定村)

Baituo Village, Qingyan Township, Huaxi District, Guiyang City, Guizhou Province (Hmongb)

(貴州省貴陽市花溪區青岩鎮擺托村)

Appendix B: Map of Hmub dialects (Central Miao)



- Yanghao Village, Sankeshu Township, Kaili City (凱里市三棵樹鎮養蒿村)
- Kaitang Township, Kaili City (凱里市凱棠鄉)
- Zhouxi Township, Kaili City (凱里市舟溪鎮)
- Pingle Village, Sankeshu Township, Kaili City (凱里市三棵樹鎮平樂村)
- Yuliang Village, Wanshui Township, Kaili City (凱里市灣水鎮魚糧村)
- 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 (台江縣台拱鎮報恩村)
- Geyi Township, Taijiang County (台江縣革一鄉)
- 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)

References

Bisang, Walter. 1999. Classifiers in East and Southeast Asian languages: Counting and beyond. *Numeral Types and Changes Worldwide*, ed. by Jadranka Gvozdanovic, 113–185. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Chen, Hong. 2009. *Guizhou Songtao Daxingzhen Miaoyu Yanjiu* [A Study of the Miao Language in Daxing Township Songtao County Guizhou Province]. Tianjin: Nankai University dissertation.

Chen, Qiguang. 1993. Miao-Yaoyu qianzhui [The prefixes in Miao-Yao languages]. *Minzu Yuwen* [Minority Languages of China] 1:1–9.

- Chen, Qiguang. 2000. Miao-Yaoyu cihui fazhan de yizhong fangshi [A possible way that Miao-Yao words developed]. *Minzu Yuwen [Minority Languages of China]* 3:67–75.
- Chen, Qiguang. 2003. Miao-Yaoyu Pian [On Miao-Yao languages]. *Han-Zangyu Gailun [An Introduction to Sino-Tibetan Languages]* (2nd edition), ed. by Xueliang Ma, 507–683. Beijing: Nationalities Press.
- Christophersen, Paul. 1939. *The Articles: A Study of Their Theory and Use in English*. Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard.
- Gerner, Matthias. 2005. The zoom-on-possessee construction in Kam (Dong): the anatomy of a new construction type. *Journal of Linguistics* 41:307–352.
- Guan, Xinqiu. 2006. Xiangxi miaoyu de qo³⁵ [qo³⁵ in western Hunan Miao language]. *Zhongnan Minzu Daxue Xuebao [Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities]* 26.3:43–47.
- Hawkins, John A. 1978. *Definiteness and Indefiniteness: A Study in Reference and Grammaticality Prediction*. London: Croom Helm.
- Heine, Bernd, & Mechthild Reh. 1984. *Grammaticalization and Reanalysis in African Languages*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske.
- Himmelman, Nikolaus P. 1996. Demonstratives in narrative discourse: a taxonomy of universal uses. *Studies in Anaphora*, ed. by Barbara Fox, 205–254. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hopper, Paul J. 1991. On some principles of grammaticalization. *Approaches to Grammaticalization*, Vol. 1, ed. by Elizabeth Closs Traugott & Bernd Heine, 17–35. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hopper, Paul J., & Elizabeth Closs Traugott. 2003. *Grammaticalization* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ji, Anlong. 2012. *Miaoyu Taijiang Hua Cankao Yufa [A Reference Grammar of Taijiang Dialect of Miao Language]*. Kunming: Yunan Nationalities Press.
- Jurafsky, Daniel. 1996. Universal tendencies in the semantics of the diminutive. *Language* 72:533–578.
- Karlgren, Bernhard. 1954. Compendium of phonetics in ancient and archaic Chinese. *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 26:211–367. Chinese Version: Karlgren, Bernhard. 1987. *Zhong-Shang gu hanyu yinyun gangyao. [Compendium of Phonetics in Ancient and Archaic Chinese]*, translated by Hongyin Nie. Jinan: Qilu Press.]
- Langacker, Ronald W. 1987. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, Vol. 1: *Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Li, Fang-Kuei. 1971. Shangguyin yanjiu [Studies on Archaic Chinese phonology]. *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies* 9(1-2):1–61, New Series.
- Li, Yunbing. 1992. Miaoyu Chuan-Qian-Dian cifangyan de mingci qianjiachengfen [The nominal proclitics in Chuan-Qian-Dian subdialect of Miao]. *Minzu Yuwen [Minority Languages of China]* 3:61–65.
- Li, Yunbing. 2002. Lun Miaoyu mingci qianzhui de gongneng [On functions of nominal prefixes in Miao]. *Minzu Yuwen [Minority Languages of China]* 3:32–42.
- Long, Jie. 1988. Miaoyu Jiweihua qo³⁵ de yufa tedian [Grammatical features of qo³⁵ in Jiwei Miao language]. *Guizhou Minzu Yanjiu [Guizhou Ethnic Studies]* 4:86–92.
- Luo, Anyuan. 1980. Guizhou Songtao Miaohua de guanci [The Miao articles in Songtao County of Guizhou]. *Minzu Yuwen [Minority Languages of China]* 4:28–35.

- Luo, Anyuan. 1990. *Xiandai Xiangxi Miaoyu Yufa* [A Grammar of Modern Miao in Western Hunan]. Beijing: Central University for Nationalities Press.
- Luo, Anyuan. 2005. *Songtao Miaohua Miaoxie Yufaxue* [Descriptive Grammar of Songtao Variety of Miao]. Beijing: Central University for Nationalities Press.
- Luo, Xingguo, & Yadong Yang. 2004. *Xiandai Miaoyu Gailun—Chuan-Qian-Dian Fangyan* [An Introduction to Present Miao Language—Hmong Dialect]. Guiyang: Guizhou Nationalities Press.
- Lyons, Christopher. 1999. *Definiteness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pulleyblank, Edwin G. 1962. The consonantal system of Old Chinese. *Asia Major* 9:58–144, 206–265.
- Shi, Defu. 2007. Qiangdong Miaoyu de zhishici xitong [The deictic system of Mhu dialect of Miao language]. *Yuyan Yanjiu* [Studies in Language and Linguistics] 1:110–114.
- Shi, Defu. 2010. Miao-Yao yu ‘muqin’ yuanliu kao [the word ‘mother’ in the Hmong-Mien languages: origin and development]. *Minzu Yuwen* [Minority Languages of China] 4:48–57.
- Shi, Defu. 2011. Miao-Yao yu ‘qi’, ‘fu’ yuanliu kao [An etymological study of ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ in Hmong-Mien languages]. *Yuyan Kexue* [Linguistics Sciences] 3:310–323.
- Shi, Defu. 2013. Gudai Miaozu muxishizuzhi de yuyanxue xiansuo [Linguistic evidence of matriarchy of ancient Miao ethnic group]. *Zhongyang Minzu Daxue Xuebao* [Journal of Central University of Nationalities] 1:111–118.
- Shi, Huaixin. 1987. Miaoyu xingtai chutan [A survey of the inflection in Miao language]. *Guizhou Minzu Yanjiu* [Guizhou Ethnic Studies] 1:79–82.
- Shi, Huaixin. 1997. Zailun Miaoyu xingtai [Another survey of the inflection in Miao language]. *Guizhou Minzu Yanjiu* [Guizhou Ethnic Studies] 3:141–146.
- Shi, Rujin. 1986. qo³⁵ zai Miaoyu zhong de diwei he zuoyong [The status and function of qo³⁵ in Miao language]. *Zhongyang Minzu Xueyuan Xuebao* [Journal of Central Institute of Nationalities] 1986 supplement: 62–66.
- Shi, Rujin. 1997. *Miao-Han Han-Miao Cidian* [Miao–Chinese and Chinese–Miao Dictionary]. Changsha: Yuelu Press.
- Shi, Zongren. 1996. Tan Miaoyu ‘ge’ de gouci gongneng yu tedian [On the features and functions of ‘ge’ in word-formation of Miao language]. *Guizhou Minzu Yanjiu* [Guizhou Ethnic Studies] 3:134–141.
- Taguchi, Yoshihisa. 2008. *Luobohe Miaoyu Cihuiji* [A Vocabulary of Luobohe Miao]. Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.
- Vandeloise, Claude. 1984. *Description of Space in French*. La Jolla: University of California, San Diego dissertation.
- Wang, Chunde. 1981. Tantan Miaoyu goucifa [On word-formation of Miao]. *Minzu Yuwen Lunji* [Collection of Papers on Minority Languages and Literatures], ed. by Editing Office of *Minzu Yuwen*, 372–389. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Wang, Chunde. 1986. *Miaoyu Yufa—Qiangdong Fangyan* [A Grammar of Miao—Qiangdong Dialect]. Beijing: Guangming Daily Press.
- Wang, Fushi. 1982. Wo dui Miaoyu yufashang jige wenti de kanfa [My view on some issues of Miao grammar]. *Minzu Yuwen Yanjiu Wenji* [Collection of Papers on Minority Language and Literature Study], ed. by Editing Office of *Minzu Yuwen*, 240–267. Xining: Qinghai Nationalities Press.

- Wang, Fushi. 1985. *Miaoyu Jianzhi* [A Sketch of Miao Languages]. Beijing: Nationalities Press.
- Wang, Fushi. 1994. *Miaoyu Guyin Gouni* [Reconstruction of Proto-Miao Language]. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA).
- Wang, Fushi, & Deguang Wang. 1996. Guizhou Weining Miaoyu dai qianjiachengfen de shuangyinjie mingci de xingtai bianhua [The inflection of disyllabic nouns with proclitic of Ab Hmaob in Weining, Guizhou]. *Minzu Yuwen* [Minority Languages of China] 1:34–37.
- Wang, Li. 1980. *Hanyu Shi Gao* [Manuscripts on the History of Chinese]. Beijing: Zhonghua Press.
- Wang, Li. 1990. *Wang Li Wenji (Dishiye Juan)* [Collected Works of Wang Li (Vol. XI)]. Jinan: Shandong Educational Press.
- Wang, Weiyang. 2005. *Miaoyu Lilun Jichu—Diandongbei Cifangyan* [Basic Theory of Miao Language: AbHmaob Dialect]. Kunming: Yunan Nationalities Press.
- Xian, Songkui. 2000. *Xin Miao-Han Cidian* [New Miao–Chinese Dictionary]. Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Press.
- Xiang, Rizheng. 1999. *Jiwei Miaoyu Yanjiu* [A Study on the Miao Language of Jiwei]. Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Press.
- Yi, Xianpei. 1961. Lun Xiangxi Miaoyu mingci de leibie fangchou [On the category of classification of nouns in the western Hunan Miao language]. *Zhongguo Yuwen* [Studies of the Chinese Language] 3:40–47.
- Yu, Jinzhi. 2004. Jishou Aizhai Miaoyu binglie fuhe mingci de jiegou he shengdiao tezheng [The structure and tonic feature of coordinate compound nouns in Aizhai Miao speech in Jishou]. *Minzu Yuwen* [Minority Languages of China] 1:26–29.
- Yu, Jinzhi. 2011. *Xiangxi Aizhai Miaoyu Cankao Yufa* [A Reference Grammar of Xiangxi Aizhai Miao Language]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.
- Yue, Saiyue. 1979. Guiyang Huaxiqu Jiading Miaohua de qianjiachengfen [The proclitics in Jiading variety of Miao in Huaxi District of Guiyang]. *Minzu Yuwen* [Minority Languages of China] 3:199–205.
- Zhang, Yongxiang, Dan Jin, & Cuiyun Cao. 1980. Qiandong Miaoyu de zhishici [The demonstratives of Hmub]. *Zhongyang Minzu Xueyuan Xueshu Lunwen Xuanji: Minzu Wenti yu Zongjiao* [Selected Papers of Central Institute of Nationalities: Racial Issues and Religion], ed. by Zhengyi Shi, 255–266. Beijing: Scientific Research Office of Central Institute of Nationalities.
- Zhang, Yongxiang, & Shiren Xu. 1990. *Miao-Han Cidian* [Miao–Chinese Dictionary—Hmub Dialect]. Guiyang: Guizhou Nationalities Press.
- Zwicky, Arnold M., & Geoffrey K. Pullum. 1983. Cliticization vs. inflection: English *n't*. *Language* 59.3:502–513.

[Received 5 November 2012; revised 11 December 2014; accepted 18 September 2015]

Department of Minority Languages and Literatures
 Minzu University of China
 No. 27, South Venue of Zhongguancun
 Haidian District, Beijing 100081, China
 defushi2006@126.com

黔東苗語 ab 和 ghab 的功能

石德富

中央民族大學

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聯的語義相似特徵：空間有定指、有語義描述內涵的地名（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 的名詞和非附加 ghab 的名詞具有區別：前者的所指往往是整體的一個部份，隱含一種部份-整體的語義關係；後者的所指沒有必要是整體的一個部份。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（上學）/ hospital（去看病）之區別。

關鍵詞：黔東苗語，定指，無定特指，詞彙化，名詞分類