

## Research Article

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# Is GIVE reliable for genealogical relatedness? A case study of extricable etyma of GIVE in Huī Chinese

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**Abstract:** This study provides an etymological study of one of the basic lexical items GIVE in a sample of 24 varieties of *Huī* Chinese, a lesser-known transitional group of Sinitic languages. By the historical-comparative method and phonological reconstruction, this study reveals over ten distinct etyma of GIVE in these geographically adjacent and genetically affiliated *Huī* dialects, such as ‘distribute’, ‘take’, ‘stretch’, ‘hold’, ‘give’, ‘pass’, ‘provide’, and ‘deliver’. This study questions the basicness and semantic stability of GIVE as one of the basic items and provides empirical support for earlier findings that the resistance to borrowability of the seemingly basic lexical items in the 100 Swadesh list and the Leipzig-Jakarta List is only moderately reliable.

**Keywords:** give, *Huī* Chinese, Swadesh list, historical-comparative method, semantic borrowability

## 1 Introduction

*Huī* Chinese 徽語 (or *Huīyǔ*) is an understudied group of Sinitic languages spoken by about 3.2 million people in a comparatively small region (circled in red in Figure 1) of Central China south of the Yangtze River, extending from southern Anhui Province to western Zhejiang and northeastern Jiangxi (Zhao 2005). It showcases a notably high degree of internal diversity, to the extent that people from neighbouring counties may not be able to understand each other, as a result of its unique geographic constraints, i.e. mountainous terrain, and constant language contact due to war-induced population immigration, and trade-driven, or spontaneous population movements in different historical strata (Meng 2005). Therefore, *Huī* varieties of Chinese are classified as (Central) Transitional Sinitic (Norman 1988, Chappell 2015, Lu 2018, Szeto and Yurayong 2021), which demonstrate not only a collection of ‘fluctuating’ features of Northern and Southern Sinitic languages, but also some features unique to this region itself, as e.g. a merged glottalized stop [ʔ], HELP- and GIVE-type pretransitive disposal markers, etc. (Lu 2018).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In terms of vocabulary, *Huī* ‘dialects’ appear to differ substantially from Mandarin varieties and have retained a considerable number of monomorphemic lexical items, e.g. [ɕi<sup>11</sup>] ‘play’ in *Túnxi* 屯溪 *Huī* (Lu 2018, 191), [fo<sup>44</sup>] ‘room’ in *Shèxiàn* 歙縣 *Huī* (Hirata 1998, 172), and [nɿ<sup>44</sup>] ‘mud’ in *Jìxí* 績溪 *Huī* (Hirata 1998, 172), while the corresponding words are bimorphemic as [wan<sup>35</sup>ʂwa<sup>21</sup>] 玩耍, [fan<sup>35</sup> tejen<sup>55</sup>] 房間, and [ni<sup>35</sup> tʰu<sup>21</sup>] 泥土 in modern standard Mandarin. Yet, at the same time, *Huī* ‘dialects’ appear to share a certain amount of isomorphy among themselves. For example, paternal grandpa is termed [ləʔ<sup>24-5</sup> tɕion<sup>44</sup>] in *Túnxi Huī* (Lu 2018), [ɿ<sup>35</sup> tɕhɿ<sup>55</sup>] in *Shèxiàn* (Liu 2013), [tsʰɔ<sup>11</sup> tsʰɔ<sup>11</sup>] in *Wúyuán*, and [tɕhie<sup>44</sup>] in *Jìxí* (Hirata 1998), cognate with 朝 \*jiau2 in CDC yet significantly distinct from 爺 \*ya2, found in many other Sinitic varieties.

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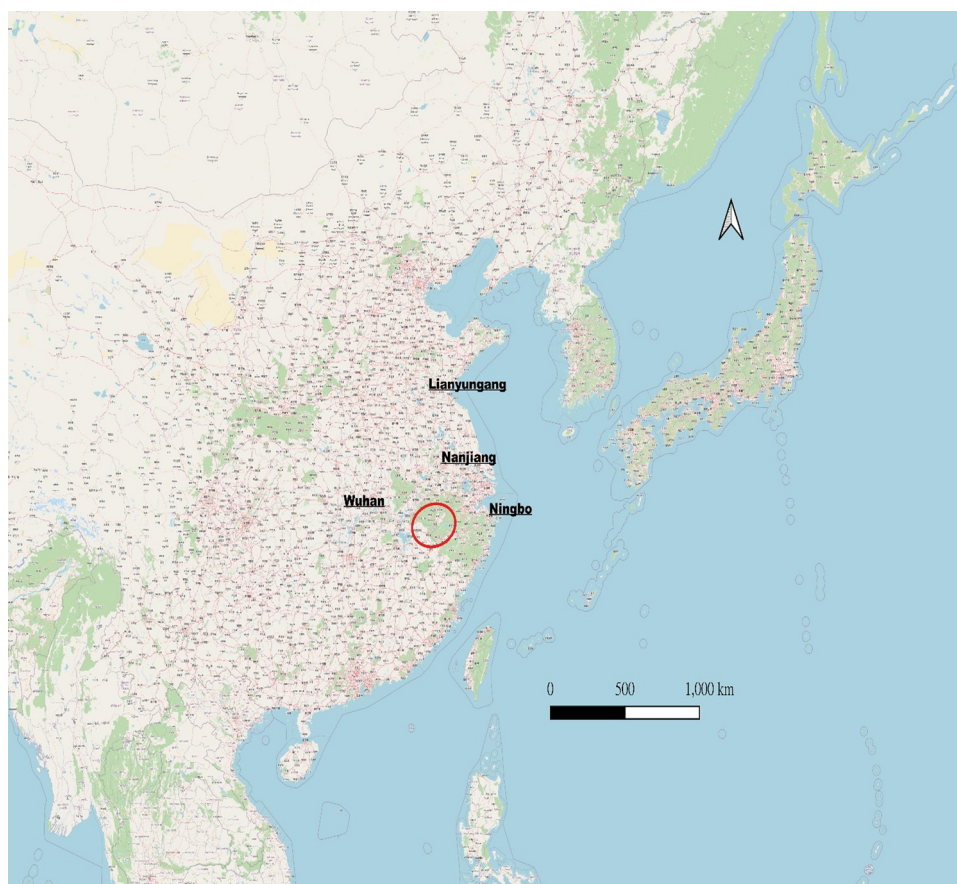


Figure 1: Location of *Huī*.

In this overlooked group, there is a complicated phenomenon concerning the morpheme GIVE. As one of the items listed in the 100-word Swadesh list (1955) and the Leipzig-Jakarta List (Tadmor 2009) for semantic borrowability, GIVE is considered a basic lexical item with high stability, preceded by MOON and followed by HEART, WHITE, FOOT, MOUTH, among others (Holman et al. 2008). However, according to the *Linguistic Atlas of Chinese Dialects* (Cao 2008, Map 151), each subgroup of Southern Sinitic languages has at least three major etyma for the morpheme GIVE, while *Huī* surprisingly has at least six source etyma. This casts doubts on the basicness of GIVE and the origins of a variety of lexical forms unanimously carrying a ‘give’ meaning in data sites both genetically and geographically close in the *Huī* region of China.

Despite the complexity described above, there is no comprehensive and systematic treatment of the etyma of GIVE in Sinitic languages in general, let alone in the lesser-known *Huī* varieties of Chinese. This is due to not only a scarcity of both first-hand and secondary data, but also a lack of textual records in the history of *Huī* Chinese. However, the etymologies of lexical items hold a pivotal position in the study of inter- and intra-dialectal syntax (Li 2016).

Regarding the morpheme GIVE, previous research on some *Huī* varieties tried to uncover its etyma, such as *Xiànggǎo* 向杲 (Shen 2012) and *Dàgǔyùn* 大谷運 (Chen 2013), yet explanations were hardly provided, except for the study by Lu and Hui (forthcoming), which makes use of historical-comparative analysis to examine the morpheme GIVE in the *Huī* dialects of *Hǎiyáng* 海陽, *Xīkǒu* 溪口, and *Túnxi*. Their research identifies this morpheme as the SEND-type verb *\*dai6* 遞 ‘to pass’, which was further grammaticalized as allative, locative, and temporal markers in *Túnxi*.

In the meantime, the etyma proposed in previous research did not always conform to historical phonological developments, even if phonological correspondence from borrowing was taken into consideration, i.e. [kʰ<sup>35</sup>]/[kei<sup>35</sup>] 給 in *Xiànggǎo*.

In light of the complexity of *Huī* ‘dialects’ and the implication it thus has on the application of the historical-comparative method, this study sets out to investigate the etyma of the morpheme GIVE in geographically adjacent *Huī* varieties of Sinitic languages through a historical-comparative analysis. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- (i) What are the etyma of GIVE in *Huī*?
- (ii) What are the implications of such radical diversity of the lexical forms for GIVE in *Huī*?

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 The historical-comparative method

The present study utilizes Common Dialectal Chinese (CDC), a reconstructed phonological system developed by Norman (2006, 2011, forthcoming), as the frame of reference for the application of the historical-comparative method. Although pre-existing pioneering works, such as Karlgren (1940), Pulleyblank (1984), and more recently, Baxter and Sagart (2014a), have laid the foundation for the historical reconstruction of Chinese in different historical eras, they all start from the system of *Qìyùn* 切韻, a rime book compiled in 601 AD, to reconstruct ‘Ancient Chinese’ or ‘Middle Chinese’. This book blended phonological categories with regional differences at different time frames, thus not reflecting authentic spoken languages throughout the history. In contrast, CDC stands out with its grounds on modern Chinese dialects, excluding *Mǐn* 閩語, with the aid of the *Qìyùn* phonological system (Norman 2006). Therefore, CDC is an ideal methodological framework for comparing the phonological developments of present-day dialects.

The implementation of the historical-comparative method relies on the diachronic correspondences produced by regular sound changes. However, in *Huī* Chinese, given the demographic background mentioned in §1, one could argue that borrowing or contact may cause irregularities that are hard to explain by diachronic correspondence alone. But if we consider the stability of the morpheme GIVE in languages all over the world and the features of GIVE as a basic word, the borrowing of GIVE implies an intensive influence on the phonological systems in the receiver language (Thomason 2001), which may leave explicit traces and obvious correspondences for the historical-comparative method. At the same time, synchronic correspondence between *Huī* varieties will also be examined as a complement to diachronic correspondence.

In the following sections, we will unravel the etyma of the morphemes GIVE in *Huī* varieties from CDC Syllabaries (Norman forthcoming). Both diachronic and synchronic correspondences of initials, rimes, and tones will be examined to identify the possible origin(s) in the syllabaries. In addition, the morphological and semantic features of the potential morpheme(s) will also be employed to confirm the most plausible etymon for GIVE in each *Huī* variety.

### 2.2 Data sources and sites

The present article focuses on GIVE in 24 *Huī* varieties from all five subgroups of *Huī*, including (1) *Yánzhōu* 嚴州: *Chún'ān* 淳安, *Shòuchāng* 壽昌, *Jiàndé* 建德, and *Suīān* 遂安 (Cao 2017); (2) *Jīngzhàn* 旌占: *Zhàndà* 占大, *Jīngdé* 旌德 (Meng 2005), and *Ānlíng* 安凌 (Tian 2006); (3) *Qíwù* 祁婺: *Qíshān* 祁山, *Zǐyáng* 紫陽 (Hirata 1998), *Ruòkēng* 箬坑 (Wang 2007), *Fúliáng* 浮梁 (Xie 2012), *Kēngtóu* 坑頭 (Huang 2008), and *Qiūkǒu* 秋口 (Cheng 2018); (4) *Xiūyī* 休夥: *Bìyáng* 碧陽 (Hirata 1998), *Hóngtán* 宏潭 (Yuan 2009), and *Liúkǒu* 流口 (Zhang 2009); (5) *Jìxī* 績歙: *Huīchéng* 徽城 (Hirata 1998), *Xiànggǎo* (Shen 2012), *Huáyáng* 華陽 (Zhao 2003), *Jīngzhōu* 荊州 (Zhao 2015), *Sānyáng* 三陽 (Li 2008), *Chéngkǎn* 呈坎 (Jia 2007), *Dàgǔyùn* (Chen 2013), and *Tāngkǒu* 湯口 (Liu 2013). The geographical distribution of each data point is shown in Figure 2.



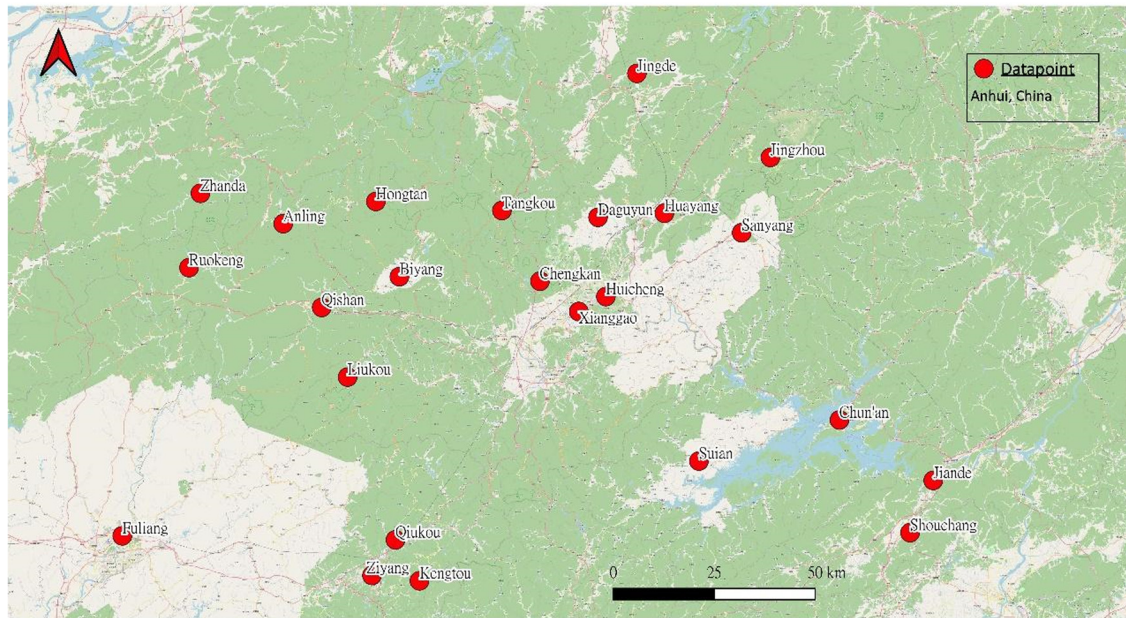


Figure 2: Map of data points in Hui.

## 2.3 Data denotation

To be consistent with CDC, numbers from 1 to 8 are employed to represent tones, i.e. 1 = *Yīnpíng* 陰平, 2 = *Yángpíng* 陽平, 3 = *Yīnshǎng* 陰上, 4 = *Yángshǎng* 陽上, 5 = *Yīnqù* 陰去, 6 = *Yángqù* 陽去, 7 = *Yīnrù* 陰入, and 8 = *Yángnrù* 陽入.<sup>2</sup> In some *Huī* varieties, there is only one type of tone *Shǎngshēng* 上聲, *Qùshēng* 去聲, and *Rùshēng* 入聲; hence, this study also uses ‘S’ to indicate *Shǎngshēng*, ‘Q’ for *Qùshēng*, and ‘R’ for *Rùshēng*.

## 2.4 Data visualization

This study employs QGIS (QGIS Development Team 2023) for map creation. The base map of the maps can be accessed through the QGIS plugin ‘QuickMapServices’.

## 3 Etyma of GIVE in Huī

- A. 分 \*fun1 ‘to distribute’; *Qíshān*: /fǎ1/, *Ruòkēng*: /fǎ1/. Hirata (1998, 300) and Wang (2007) consider the morpheme GIVE to be 分, which is consistent with the phonological development of GIVE in these varieties, as [f-] with the *Yīnpíng* tone was developed from \*f- with tone \*1, and [-ǎ] in *Qíshān* as well as [-ǎ] in *Ruòkēng* were evolved from \*-un, \*-ing, \*-iang, or \*-eng. At the same time, 分 \*fun1 happens to meet the semantic requirements to be understood as a GIVE-type verb.

<sup>2</sup> *Píng* 平, *Shǎng* 上, *Qù* 去, and *Rù* 入 are the four tonal categories of *Qièyùn* period, each of which is further divided into the *Yáng* 陽 and *Yīn* 陰 subcategories, leading to a total of eight tone categories. These categories are still used in the description and analysis of modern Chinese dialects, although their actual tone values vary considerably in Sinitic, and hence, e.g. a *Yīnpíng* 陰平 tone may correspond to very different tone values in two Sinitic varieties.

**Table 1:** Pronunciation of \*ngi2 儀 and \*bung2 蓬 in *Chún'ān* and *Shòuchāng*

Varieties	Word	
	*ngi2 儀 'rite'	*bung2 蓬 'canopy'
<i>Chún'ān</i>	iQ	ɲ1
<i>Shòuchāng</i>	p'ɔmQ	p'ɔm2

B. 端 \*ton1 'to hold'; *Fúliáng*: /to1/, *Zǐyáng*: /tom1/. While earlier research on *Fúliáng Huì* characterized GIVE by 多 'many' (Xie 2012, 101), which is phonologically plausible but grammatically mismatched with the property of GIVE, Hirata (1998, 296) used 端 to represent GIVE, which is undoubtedly the most suitable choice for GIVE in *Fúliáng* and *Zǐyáng*. [-o] in *Fúliáng* and [-om] in *Zǐyáng* share the same possible origins, namely \*-an and \*-on. Considering the *Yīnpíng* tone in two dialect forms is the regular correspondence for \*-t- in tone \*1, 端 \*ton1 is suggested as a probable etymon of GIVE in *Fúliáng* and *Zǐyáng*.

C. 拿<sup>3</sup> \*na2 'to take'; *Shòuchāng*: /nuə1/, *Chún'ān*: /laQ/. In *Chún'ān*, \*n- has been denasalized and was thus merged into \*l-. For example, \*nou4 腦 'brain' and \*lou4 老 'old' are homonyms as/ ləS/, while these two words retain the distinction as /nɿ4/ and /lɿ4/ in *Shòuchāng*. This implies that the onset of /laQ/ in *Chún'ān* might have developed from \*n- and share the same source as the initial of the morpheme GIVE in *Shòuchāng*. As for the rimes, [-uə] in *Chún'ān* and [-a] in *Shòuchāng* have an overlapping origin from \*-a, thus also pointing to 拿 \*na2, which was proposed by Cao (2017) too.

In spite of the tonal incongruity between \*na2 and /laQ/, parallel examples in *Chún'ān* show that tone \*2 has shifted to *Qùshēng*, e.g. \*ngi2 儀 'rite' > /iQ/ and \*bung2 蓬 'canopy' > /p'ɔmQ/, while the reflexes of \*ngi2 and \*bung2 are /nɲ1/ and /p'ɔm2/, respectively in *Shòuchāng* (Table 1).<sup>4</sup> At the same time, tone \*2 has merged with tone \*6 in *Chún'ān* (Cao 2017, 39), forming the *Qùshēng* tone. Therefore, /laQ/ in *Chún'ān* is likely derived from \*na2, though further studies are needed to understand the trigger for this sound change, via internal factors or language contact.

D. 引 \*yin4 'to stretch'; *Suíān*: /ŋ4/. The syllabic consonant [ŋ] with tone 4 in *Suíān* developed from two main sources, one as a result of the loss of initials and vowels as well as the merger of nasal codas from \*yin, \*nhing, \*yang, and the other as a result of the loss of vowels from \*ngu, \*nhi. Considering the verbal nature of 引 \*yin4 and the plausibility of a semantic extension from 'stretch' as a TAKE-type verb to GIVE, it is likely that 引 \*yin4 is the etymon of GIVE in *Suíān*, in agreement with Cao's (2017, 330) characterization (Table 2).

E. 把 \*pa3 'to hold'; *Jiàndé*: /poQ/, *Zhàndà*: /pɔS/, *Jīngdé*: /pæS/. [-ɔ] in *Zhàndà* shares the same origin, \*-a, with [-o] in *Jiàndé*, supporting Cao's (2017, 330) characterization of 把 as 'GIVE' in *Jiàndé*. Although, at first glance, [-æ] in *Jīngdé* seems to have originated from \*-an based on Meng's (2005, 293) phonological analysis of *Jiàndé*, it is worth noting that 1) no TAKE/HOLD, GIVE nor HELP type verb with \*p- is found with \*-an; and 2) GIVE is recorded as [pɛS] in *Jīngdé* in a later survey (Project for the Protection of Language Resources of China 2023), where one of the sources of [-ɛ] is \*-a, if 爬 \*ba2 'to creep' > /pɛ2/ is considered. Therefore, 把 stands out as the most plausible etymon of GIVE in *Jīngdé*.

Referring to the *Linguistic atlas of Chinese dialects* (Cao 2008, Map 151), 把 is a common etymon of GIVE in Southern Mandarin varieties, i.e. *Jiānghuái* Mandarin (*Jiānghuái Guānhuà* 江淮官話) and Southwestern Mandarin (*Xīnán Guānhuà* 西南官話), meaning that if non-Mandarin dialects employ 把 as GIVE, it is very likely a product of language contact. The irregular tonal development of /poQ/ in *Jiàndé* confirms this conjecture with parallel examples that demonstrate the change of tone \*3 to tone *Qùshēng*. For example, \*cie3 煮 'cook' > /tɕyQ/ while it is /tɕyS/ and /tsɿS/ in *Zhàndà* and *Jīngdé* respectively. This example also demonstrates the synchronic correspondence between *Qùshēng* in *Jiàndé* and *Shǎngshēng* in *Zhàndà* and *Jīngdé*.

What is remarkable is that the infiltration of Southern Mandarin extends much more southward in *Huì* than previously suggested in the study by Cao 2008 (Map 151) from GIVE in *Jiàndé*, *Zhàndà*, and *Jīngdé*.

<sup>3</sup> No ancestral form of 拿 is available in the CDC Syllabaries (Norman forthcoming). Here, we use the pronunciation described in Middle Chinese rime books and in the CDC system to obtain a reconstructed form of 拿.

<sup>4</sup> In this article, '>' is employed to represent 'change(s) to'.

Table 2: Morpheme GIVE in each locality

Locality	GIVE in tone category (italic) and tone value	Etymon according to previous research (if any)	Etymon according to the present research
Qíshān	<i>fā1</i> [fā <sup>11</sup> ]	分	分
Ruòkēng	<i>fā1</i> [fā <sup>11</sup> ]	分	分
Fúliáng	<i>tō1</i> [tō <sup>55</sup> ]	多	端
Ziyáng	<i>tōm1</i> [tōm <sup>44</sup> ]	端	端
Shòuchāng	<i>nuā1</i> [nuā <sup>11</sup> ]	拿	拿
Chún'ān	<i>lāQ</i> [lā <sup>53</sup> ]	拿	拿
Suíān	<i>ŋ4</i> [ŋ <sup>422</sup> ]	引 (proposed yet not confirmed by Chao (2017))	引
Jiàndé	<i>pōQ</i> [pō <sup>55</sup> ]	把	把
Zhàndà	<i>pōS</i> [pō <sup>35</sup> ]	把	把
Jīngdé	<i>pæS</i> [pæ <sup>213</sup> ]	界	把
Kēngtóu	<i>kā6</i> [kā <sup>52</sup> ] <sup>a</sup>	給	給
Qiūkǒu	<i>ka6</i> [ka <sup>55</sup> ]	給	給
Xiànggǎo	<i>kʰS/keiS</i> [kʰ <sup>35</sup> ]/[kei <sup>35</sup> ]	給	過
Liúkǒu	<i>pʰ1</i> [pʰ <sup>33</sup> ]	界	界
Biyáng	<i>pei1</i> [pei <sup>31</sup> ]	界	界
Huáyáng	<i>xā5</i> [xā <sup>53</sup> ]	—	共 / 供
Sānyáng	<i>xan6</i> [xan <sup>33</sup> ]	—	共 / 供
	<i>xe6</i> [xe <sup>33</sup> ]	—	交
Jīngzhōu	<i>xe5</i> [xe <sup>35</sup> ]	給	共 / 供
Chéngkǎn	<i>xe1</i> [xe <sup>42</sup> ]	—	共 / 供
Hóngtán	<i>xe1</i> [xe <sup>55</sup> ]	—	共 / 供
Huīchéng	<i>xe1</i> [xe <sup>31</sup> ]	—	共 / 供
Ānlíng	<i>xē1</i> [xē <sup>21</sup> ]	—	共 / 供
Tāngkǒu	<i>xāR</i> [xā <sup>31</sup> ]	還	共 / 供
Dàgǔyùn	<i>xʰ1</i> [xʰ <sup>31</sup> ]	蒿	交

<sup>a</sup>The rime of 給 was transcribed as [-A] by Huang (2008). This study uses standard IPA to represent the pronunciation.

- F. 給 \*kip7 ‘to give’; *Kēngtóu*: /kā6/, *Qiūkǒu*: /ka6/. 給 is the etymon of GIVE widely found in Northern Mandarin (Cao 2008, Map 151). As postulated by Huang (2008) and Cheng (2018), the etyma of GIVE in *Kēngtóu* and *Qiūkǒu* were 給, and their findings align with the analysis from CDC, to wit: [-ä] in *Kēngtóu* and [-a] in *Qiūkǒu* with tone 6 emerged from \*-ip with the checked tone. 給 as GIVE highlights an intrusion of Northern Mandarin influence into the hinterland of non-Mandarin dialects.
- G. 過 \*kuo1 ‘to pass’; *Xiànggǎo*: /kʰS/ or /keiS/. Shen (2012) conducted a comprehensive survey on *Xiànggǎo Huī* and concluded the morpheme GIVE in *Xiànggǎo Huī* is 給, the same as Northern Mandarin and Putonghua. However, the association between \*-ip in 給 and [-ɿ] or [-ei], and the relationship between tone \*7 and *Shǎngshēng* in *Xiànggǎo* appear to be weakly established. Tones \*7 and \*8 have merged but a difference remains for tones \*1 to \*6. Moreover, [-ɿ] developed from \*-o or \*-uo, while [-ei] evolved from \*-ia, \*-iam, or \*-ian. Phonological evidence suggests that /kʰS/ and /keiS/ have not evolved from 給 \*kip7, but rather from 過<sup>5</sup> \*kuo1. Although the relationship between tone \*1 and *Shǎngshēng* in *Xiànggǎo* seems to be irrelevant at first glance, the same change is recorded in literary words, e.g. \*khiuang1 傾 ‘to incline’ > /tɕʰynS/ and \*siun1 荀(子) ‘Xun(zi)’ > /ɕynS/, further implying the effect from the prestige dialect.
- H. 界 \*pi6 ‘to give’; *Liúkǒu*: /pʰ1/, *Biyáng*: /pei1/. Tone 1 in these varieties corresponds not only to tone \*1 but also to other tonal categories including \*tone 6. For instance, \*zhie6 薯 ‘potato’ > /ɕy1/ and \*gui6 櫃 ‘counter’ > /tɕy1/ in *Liúkǒu*; \*nun6 嫩 ‘tender’ > /nuan1/ in *Biyáng* (Table 3). Since one of the common sources of [-ɿ] in *Liúkǒu* and [-ei] in *Biyáng* is \*-i, it suggests that the etyma of GIVE in these varieties are likely to be 界 \*pi6.

5 [-ei] may be a result of diphthongizing from [-ɿ], which needs further studies.

**Table 3:** Examples of tone 1 syllable in *Liúkǒu* and *Biyáng* (bold) whose correspondences in CDC belonging to other tonal categories

Varieties	Word				
	*zhie6 薯 ‘potato’	*gui6 櫃 ‘counter’	*ngo4 我 ‘I’	*tso3 左 ‘left’	*nun6 嫩 ‘tender’
<i>Liúkǒu</i>	<b>ɛy1</b>	<b>tɛy1</b>	aS	tsoS	lɛQ
<i>Biyáng</i>	sau2	tɛyɛiS	<b>ŋa1</b>	<b>tsau1</b>	<b>nuaŋ1</b>

Given that 畀 \*pi6 is not a common etymon for GIVE in *Huī*, its presence in *Liúkǒu* and *Biyáng Huī* is probably due either to 1) external influences resulting from intensive contact; or 2) internal lexical variation in *Huī*. The phonological developments in *Liúkǒu* and *Biyáng Huī* support assumption 1. In *Liúkǒu* and *Biyáng Huī*, tone 1 derives from a variety of other tonal categories involving basic words, such as \*ngo4 我 ‘I’ > /ŋa1/, \*tso3 左 ‘left’ > /tsau1/ in *Biyáng*. However, these changes are unusual because these two *Huī* varieties still preserve *Shǎngshēng* and *Qùshēng* as reflexes of tones \*3 and \*4 and tones \*5 and \*6 in their phonological inventories. Such shifts in basic words are hard to explain in terms of regular sound changes. Regardless of whether the aforementioned hypothesis stands, the presence of 畀 \*pi6 in *Huī* varieties raises questions about the basicness of GIVE.

- I. 共/供 \*xiung5; *Huáyáng*: /xǎ5/, *Sānyáng*: /xan6/, *Jīngzhōu*: /xɛ5/, *Chéngkǎn*: /xɛ1/, *Hóngtán*: /xɛ1/, *Huīchéng*: /xɛ1/, *Ānlíng*: /xɛ1/, *Tāngkǒu*: /xaR/. While other scholars left the etymon of GIVE in different *Huī* varieties such as *Huáyáng*, *Sānyáng* and *Chéngkǎn* blank, Zhao (2015) tried to reconstruct it in *Jīngzhōu Huī* as 給 \*kip7. However, we believe that there are several doubts concerning the historical phonological correspondence with 給 \*kip7. The reflexes of syllables with a plosive coda \*-p, \*-t, \*-k in CDC still retain a weakened coda [-ʔ] in *Jīngzhōu*, thus belonging to an independent tone category, and the source of [-ɛ] is not \*-ip. Therefore, the morpheme GIVE may be supposed to have another etymon rather than 給 \*kip7.

Historical correspondences for GIVE with \*xiung5 in the dialects mentioned above are presented in Table 4. The GIVE morphemes in *Huáyáng*, *Jīngzhōu*, *Sānyáng*, *Hóngtán* and *Ānlíng*, as well as in *Huīchéng* and *Chéngkǎn*, appear to correspond with each other through overlapping clues in tone and rime. Although *Tāngkǒu* shows an irregular pattern in the tone for its GIVE morpheme, it might be due to influence from neighbouring dialects, like *Chéngkǎn* and *Huīchéng*, where the GIVE morpheme shares a similar mid-falling tone contour with *Tāngkǒu*. Similar impacts on tone value of lexical items have been recorded across different Sinitic dialects, such as the influence of Southwestern Mandarin on the *Línwǔ* dialect (*Línwǔ Tǔhuà* 臨武土話, Hu 2009). Additionally, [-a] in *Tāngkǒu* corresponds to [-ɛ] in *Chéngkǎn*, as shown in Table 5. This indicates that GIVE in *Chéngkǎn* may have merged with \*-ui, \*-ak and \*-ek, which subsequently transferred to *Tāngkǒu*. This suggests a possible etymological relationship between /xaR/ in *Tāngkǒu*, /xɛ1/ in *Chéngkǎn* and /xɛ1/ in *Huīchéng*.

The source of GIVE in *Huīchéng*, and whether /xɛ1/ evolved from a distinct etymon from *Huáyáng* and *Jīngzhōu*, is worth considering. Yet, /xɛ1/ in *Huīchéng* appears to have been introduced as a loanword, as no other instances of velar initials paired with [-ɛ] can be found in *Huīchéng Huī*. From Table 4, it can be inferred that the source of /xɛ1/ is likely correlated with GIVE in *Hóngtán*. The relationship among GIVE verbs in *Huáyáng*, *Jīngzhōu*, *Sānyáng*, *Hóngtán*, *Ānlíng*, *Huīchéng*, *Chéngkǎn*, and *Tāngkǒu* is summarized in Figure 3. Based on this, it can be deduced that the etymon of GIVE in these *Huī* varieties is \*xiung5.

As there is no correlated syllable for \*xiung5 in CDC Syllabaries, the present study uses the reconstructed form obtained from internal comparison to represent the etymon of GIVE in these *Huī* varieties. However, \*xiung5 is likely a cognate to 共 \*giung6 ‘to share’ (Old Chinese, OC: \*\*N-k(r)onʔ-s),<sup>6</sup> as they share the same rime and the place of articulation in their initials. 共 \*giung6 was written as 供 \*kiung5 ‘to offer’ (OC: \*\*k<r>onʔ)<sup>7</sup> in ritual bronzes such as the *Chǔwáng Yǎnkǎn Dǐng* 楚王畚肯鼎 (Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica 2014) and the *Xīgōng sīnián* of the *Zuǒ Zhuàn* 《左傳·僖公四年》.

<sup>6</sup> The Old Chinese reconstruction follows Baxter and Sagart (2014a, b).

<sup>7</sup> Sometimes, it is hard to match the pronunciation collected in contemporary dialects with historical written records or rime dictionaries, due to functions of rime dictionaries in providing the ‘standard’ pronunciations for classical texts and guidelines for

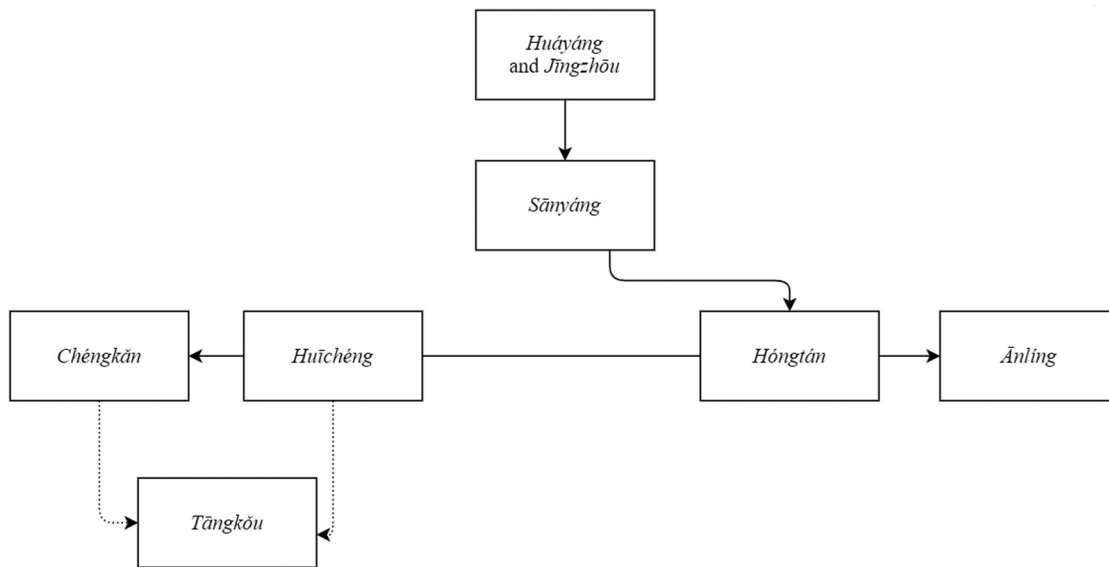
**Table 4:** Historical correspondences of GIVE with \*xiung5 in *Huī*

	<i>Huáyáng</i>	<i>Jīngzhōu</i>	<i>Sányáng</i>	<i>Hóngtán</i>	<i>Ānlíng</i>	<i>Huìchéng</i>	<i>Chéngkǎn</i>	<i>Tāngkǒu</i>
Transcription of 'Give'	xǎ <sup>5</sup>	xɛ <sup>5</sup>	xan <sup>6</sup>	xɛ <sup>7</sup>	xɛ <sup>7</sup>	xɛ <sup>7</sup>	xɛ <sup>7</sup>	xɑ <sup>R</sup>
'Give' in IPA	xǎ <sup>35</sup>	xɛ <sup>35</sup>	xan <sup>33</sup>	xɛ <sup>55</sup>	xɛ <sup>21</sup>	xɛ <sup>31</sup>	xɛ <sup>42</sup>	xɑ <sup>31</sup>
The tone(s) that possibly developed from	5	5	4,5 (very few cases), 6	1,5	1	1	1,2,5	7,8
The rimes that possibly developed from	*un, *ung, *om, *ang, *iung	*om, *on, *en, *un, *eng, *ang, *ung, *iung	*om, *en, *un, *eng, *ang, *ung	*oi, *on, *ion, *in, *un, *iun (a few cases: *ai, *om, *an, *ang, *uang)	*on, *un	*ui, *iam, *ian, *ion (a few cases: *ia, *iot)	*ui, *ip, *ot, *ut, *ak, *ek	*ui, *oi, *ak, *ek, (a few cases: *i, *iut, iak)



Table 5: Example of [-a] in *Tāngkǒu* and [-ɛ] in *Chéngkǎn*

Varieties	Word 黑 ‘black’
<i>Tāngkǒu</i>	[xa <sup>31</sup> ]
<i>Chéngkǎn</i>	[xɛ <sup>31</sup> ]

Figure 3: Relation chart of GIVE in *Huáyáng*, *Jīngzhōu*, *Sānyáng*, *Hóngtán*, *Ānlíng*, *Huīchéng*, *Chéngkǎn* and *Tāngkǒu*.

J. 交 \*xau1/hau6; *Dàgǔyùn*: /xɿ1/, *Sānyáng*: /xɛ6/. Although *Huáyáng*, *Sānyáng*, and *Dàgǔyùn* are geographically adjacent as shown in Figure 4, it is likely that *Huáyáng* has received greater influence from *Huīchéng*, which is one of the most prestigious varieties of Southern *Huī* (Anhuisheng Difangzhi Bianzuan Weiyuanhui 1997, 423), hence *Huáyáng* uses GIVE with another etymon exclusively. In contrast, *Dàgǔyùn* and *Sānyáng* are located on Mount Huangshan (>1,000 m) and *Qīngliáng* Peak (*Qīngliáng Fēng* 清凉峰, 1,787 m), respectively (State Council of the People's Republic of China 2013), which surround the plains that *Huáyáng* and *Huīchéng* are located in. As a result, *Dàgǔyùn* and *Sānyáng* were isolated from the spread of \*xiung5 and make use of the alternative source \*xau1/hau6, which have no correlated syllable in CDC Syllabaries. Although Chen (2013) employed \*xou1 蒿 ‘mugworts’ as the source of the verb GIVE with an herbaceous plant, it does not

writing poetry. However, the case of \*xiung5 is worth rethinking. The spirantization of velar plosives is not a rare phenomenon in the development of Chinese. One well-known example is that \*g- > \*h- in certain characters before CDC period (using the terminology under the frame of Middle Chinese, this refers to the shift of *qínmǔ* 羣母 > *xiámǔ* 匣母), resulting in the correspondence of both \*g- and \*h- with the same group of Old Chinese initials, e.g. \*\*g(w)-, \*\*m-k-, \*\*k(k)-g(w)-, \*\*C.[g]-, and \*\*N-k- as in 共 \*\*N-k(r)ŋʔ-s. According to Baxter and Sagart (2014b, 53), the stative or intransitive verb prefix, \*\*N-, would cause the voicing of the subsequent \*\*k-, before the dropping of \*\*N-: \*\*N-k- > \*\*N-g- > \*g- (> \*h-). It is possible that \*xiung5 may result from 1) the dropping of \*\*N- from 供 \*\*N-k(r)ŋʔ-s because of its change into a transitive verb, followed by the spirantization of \*k- to \*x-; or 2) the direct spirantization from 供 \*kiung5. The spirantization might have been triggered by a phonological condition or another factor. The reconstruction of Baxter and Sagart (2014a, b) introduces a pharyngealization marker ʕ for the initials of the reflexes of *xiámǔ*, such as \*N-kʕ-, attempting to demonstrate the conditions of spirantization. However, a certain degree of regional variation already existed in the Old Chinese period, and thus, some features of the reflexes found in modern dialects, such as in Hakka, are not fully explainable by Old Chinese (Baxter and Sagart 2014b, 451–2). The etymon of \*xiung5 in *Huī* could have different ancestral form from Old Chinese or undergone distinct developments in Old Chinese, resulting in the difficulties to determine the condition(s) of spirantization within the frame of Old Chinese. Further investigation from a cross-subgroup perspective is needed, in order to understand the historical development of velar consonants in the transition from Old Chinese to the latter period.

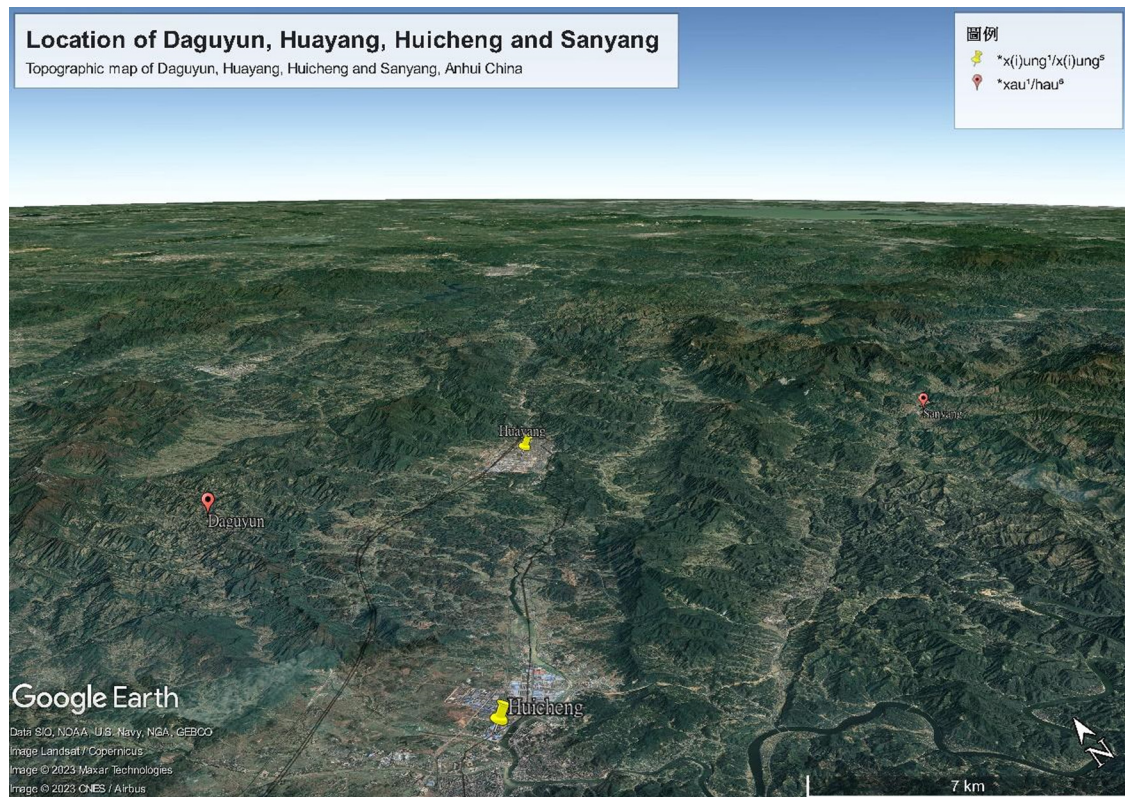


Figure 4: Topographic map of *Dàgǔyùn*, *Huáyáng*, *Huìchéng*, and *Sānyáng* in Anhui Province of China (Google Earth Pro 2020).

match the meaning of GIVE or its syntactic features. This study uses the reconstructed forms obtained from *Dàgǔyùn* and *Sānyáng* to represent GIVE in these *Huī* varieties. Synchronically speaking, tone 1 in *Dàgǔyùn* and tone 6 in *Sānyáng* show no obvious correlation, implying that one of the GIVE verbs in *Dàgǔyùn* or *Sānyáng* may be borrowed from a source external to these two varieties. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the exact ancestral form based on the current data. Still, the possibility of \*xau1/hau6 being cognates of 交 \*kau¹ ‘to deliver’ is worth considering, making \*xau1 a more favourable candidate. This assumption gains support if the phonetic-semantic compound character 校 \*kau5/hau6 developed from 交 \*kau1 is taken into consideration, because 校 shows two different forms with \*k- and \*h-, suggesting a close linkage between the voiceless velar plosive and the velar fricative in CDC<sup>8</sup> (also refers to Note 7). Still, additional research and analysis are needed to delve into the historical development of velar consonants as well as the relationships between \*k- and \*h-.

## 4 Discussion

The geographical distribution of the morpheme GIVE in *Huī* is illustrated in Figure 5. Circles represent the etyma uniquely or dominantly *Huī*; triangles indicate the varieties using the GIVE morphemes 給 \*kip7 and 把 \*pa3, the prevalent forms in Mandarin dialects; squares represent the etyma associated with *Gàn* (Gànyǔ 贛語) and Hakka; and pentagons identify the varieties which share the same morpheme GIVE as *Wú* (Wúyǔ 吳語), with reference to the map of GIVE in the *Linguistic Atlas of Chinese Dialects* (Cao 2008, Map 151). Remarkably, there are ten forms of the morpheme GIVE in *Huī*, which adds up to eleven when \*diai6 遞 in *Hǎiyáng*, *Xíkǒu*, and *Túnxī*, proposed in the study by Lu and Hui (forthcoming) is included. Among these forms, GIVE with an

<sup>8</sup> The relationship can also be depicted with the examples 孝 \*xau5 ‘filial piety’ and 教 \*kau1 or \*kau5 ‘to teach’; 高 \*kou1 ‘tall’ and 蒿 \*xou1; 甘 \*kom1 ‘sweet’ and 酣 \*xom1 or \*hom2 ‘be satisfied’, among others.



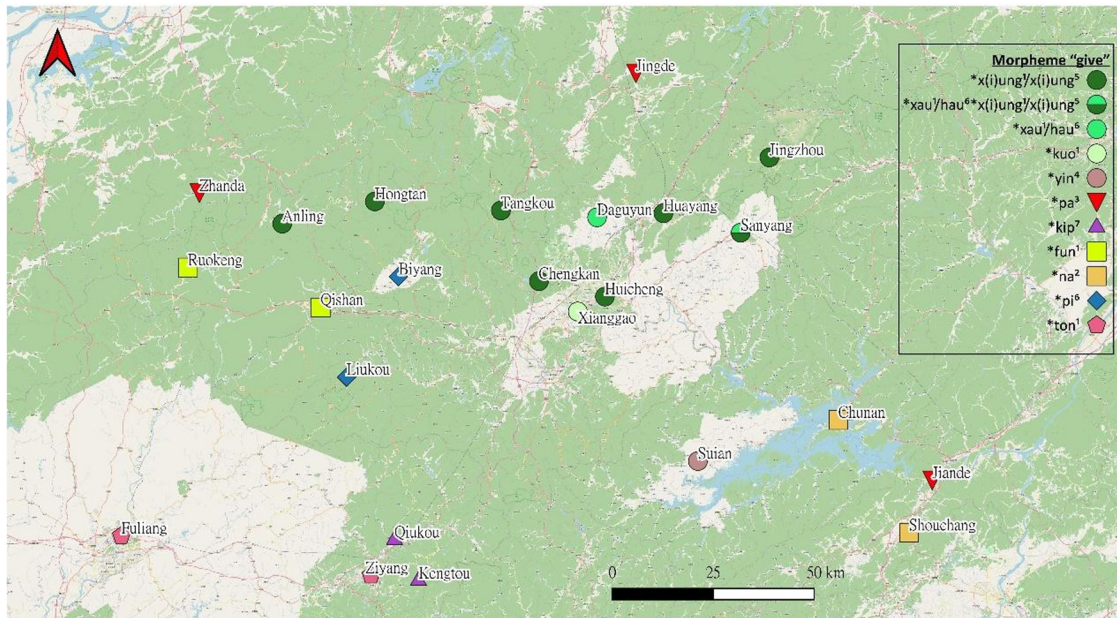


Figure 5: Distribution of the morpheme GIVE in *Huī*.

\*x- initial is dominant in *Huī*, although it is surrounded by the Mandarin forms as well as other forms from other non-Mandarin dialects.

Interestingly, GIVE with an x- initial ([xei] and [xɛŋ] as well as their correspondences) is also dominant in various dialects in northern and western Guangxi Province, i.e. *Yuè* (Yuèyǔ 粵語), *Pínghuà* 平話 and Southwestern Mandarin (Cao 2008, Map 151), which may be correlated with \*x(i)ung5 and \*xau1/hau6. For this reason, further research is needed to explore the relationship between \*x(i)ung1/x(i)ung5 and \*xau1/hau6 with GIVE morphemes in the aforementioned dialects of Guangxi.

Among the ten distinct forms, three types of source verbs could be identified (Lu and Szeto 2023), based on the semantic map model (Malchukov et al. 2010, 55), namely:

- (i) GIVE-type verbs, with the core semantics of ‘caused possession’, e.g. \*fun1 ‘distribute’ [+give, +manner] in *Qíshān* and *Ruòkēng*, \*kip7 ‘give’ [+give, -manner] in *Kēngtóu* and *Qiūkǒu*, \*pi6 ‘give’ [+give, -manner] in *Liúkǒu* and *Biyáng* and the plausible source of GIVE \*xiung5 ‘offer’ [+give, +manner] in *Huáyáng*, *Sānyáng*, *Jīngzhōu*, *Chéngkǎn*, *Hóngtán*, *Huīchéng*, *Ānlíng*, and *Tāngkǒu*;
- (ii) SEND-type verbs, with the inherent semantics of ‘caused motion’ in an allative path, e.g. \*kuo1 ‘pass’ [+send, +manner] in *Xiànggǎo*, \*diai6 in *Túnxī* (Lu and Hui forthcoming) and the possible source of GIVE \*xau1 or hau6 ‘to deliver’ [+send, +manner] in *Dàgǔyùn* and *Sānyáng*; and
- (iii) TAKE-type verbs, in an instrumental path, e.g. \*pa3 ‘hold’ [+take, +manner] in *Jiàndé*, *Zhàndà*, and *Jīngdé*, \*na2 ‘take’ [+take, +manner] in *Shòuchāng* and *Chún’ān*, \*ton1 ‘hold’ [+take, +manner] in *Fúliáng* and *Zīyáng*, and \*yin4 ‘stretch’ [+take, +manner] in *Suīán*.

Going back to the broader context, it is noteworthy that the etyma of GIVE in *Huī* Chinese display exceptional diversity, featuring at least ten different forms, setting it apart from other Sinitic dialects, as mentioned in §1. There are two plausible explanations for this phenomenon.

One possibility is that the stability of the morpheme GIVE is not as speculated, despite its inclusion in the 100-word Swadesh list (1955), and the historical development of GIVE in Chinese supports this assumption. Before the *Yuán* Dynasty (1271–1368), 予/與 \*ye4, \*\*m-q(r)a? acted as the prevalent verb of giving:<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Example (1) was transcribed in Old Chinese (Baxter and Sagart 2014a, b), whereas examples (3) and (4) were transcribed using CDC. As the periods covered by these two systems do not extend to the *Hàn* Dynasty, Pinyin was employed in example (2).

- (1) Western Zhōu Dynasty (1045 BC–771 BC):

雖 無 予 之  
 \*\*s-q<sup>wij</sup> \*\*ma \*\*la? \*\*tə

although no give 3

路車 乘馬.

lùchē shèngmǎ

carriage a team of four horses

‘Even though (we) have nothing to give them, (they) have had horses and carriages.’

*Cǎishū, Xiǎoyǎ, Book of Songs 《詩經·小雅·采芣》*

- (2) Hàn Dynasty (202 BC–9 AD, 25–220 AD):

則 與 一 生 彘肩。

zé yǔ yī shēng zhìjiān

then give one raw pork-shoulder

‘Then give him a raw pork shoulder.’

*Hóngmén Banquet 《鴻門宴》*

- (3) Northern Sòng Dynasty (960–1127):

舉 以 予 人。

\*kie5 \*yi4 \*ye4 \*nhin2

all thereby give people.

‘Thereby give everything to the other.’

*On the Six Fallen States 《六國論》*

After the Northern Sòng Dynasty, the invasion of nomadic pastoralists into China prompted significant changes in Sinitic languages. Han immigrants, as a result, fled southward to escape warfare and brought along their dialects to the *Huī* region, contributing to these changes. During this time, the verbs for giving experienced dramatic changes: 給 \*kip7 developed the meaning of GIVE from ‘to enrich/to make abundant’ in the Yuán Dynasty (Wan 2013) and gradually replaced 予/與 \*ye4 in northern Sinitic dialects. This evolution shows that 給 \*kip7 did not serve as a dominant GIVE in the first instance, which is the same case with the etyma of GIVE in *Huī* varieties. Therefore, it is evident that the verbs for GIVE can be relatively unstable in their semantics. The competition between 予/與 \*ye4 and 給 \*kip7 highlights that GIVE can be semantically dynamic.

Another example of this rapid evolution of the form of GIVE can be seen in southern Sinitic dialects, from a novel in the late Míng Dynasty (1368–1644) written by Féng Mènglóng 馮夢龍, who was born and raised in Sūzhōu 蘇州:

- (4) 不 期 太 守 不 予 處 分。
- \*put7 \*gi2 \*thai5shieu5 \*put7 \*ye4 \*chie3fun1
- NEG expect prefect NEG give punishment
- ‘Do not expect the County prefect to give no punishment.’
- Chapter 8, *Stories to Awaken the World* 《醒世恒言·第八卷》
- Even 予/與 \*ye4 was retained in southern Sinitic dialects at least until the late Míng Dynasty, but it was later replaced by 撥 \*pot7 ‘to distribute’, further depicting the instability of GIVE in both basicness and semantics. Therefore, the applicability of using GIVE to examine the genealogical relationship between languages or dialects is at least questionable.
- Another possibility for the exceptional diversity of GIVE in *Huī* is that varieties classified as *Huī* may actually belong to different groups of Sinitic dialects other than *Huī*. In fact, there has been a long-standing debate on whether *Huī* should be classified as an independent group within the Sinitic dialects, and different scholars have proposed contradicting views that *Huī* should be grouped with Mandarin, Wú, or Gàn (Zhao

2005, Wang 2021). Therefore, it is possible that different subgroups of *Huī* could be deemed as belonging to different groups of Sinitic dialects, rather than a uniformed subgroup of Sinitic languages on its own merits. Notably, even varieties within the same subgroup of *Huī*, in spite of sharing common features that suggest a closer genealogical relationship, different etyma of GIVE can still be observed. For example, in the closely related *Yánzhōu* subgroup, *Chún'ān* and *Shòuchāng* employ 拿 \*na2, *Jiàndé Huī* uses 把 \*pa3, and *Suíān Huī* utilizes 引 \*yin4 (Figure 5). This radical diversity, despite the close genealogical and geographical relationships within *Huī* varieties, underscores the need for a more careful use of GIVE as an indicator to illuminate the genealogical relationship between *Huī* ‘dialects’/ languages.

## 5 Conclusions

This study provides a diachronic reconstruction of one of the proposed basic lexical items in the Swadesh List (1955), namely GIVE, in a sample of 24 *Huī* Chinese varieties spoken in a relatively small geographic area in Southern Anhui, West Northern Jiangsu and Northern Jiangxi Provinces. Our study has revealed more than ten remarkably different etyma for GIVE in *Huī* languages, suggesting that those morphemes conventionally considered to be ‘give’ synchronically may not originate as GIVE in the first place. Our findings provide empirical support for Holman et al.’s (2008) observation, which was implemented in the Automated Similarity Judgment Program database (Wichmann et al. 2022), that the resistance to borrowability of the seemingly basic lexical items in the 100 Swadesh list and the Leipzig-Jakarta List (Haspelmath and Tadmor 2009) is only moderately reliable: indeed, GIVE is excluded from the 40-word list of the most ‘stable and effective’ lexical items for genetic classification, but instead ranked at No. 47 with a stability ratio of 23.3% among the 100-word Swadesh list. However, further studies are required on the forms and functions of GIVE across Sinitic languages, especially in lesser-known varieties, to provide additional support and validation for our proposal.

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**Data availability statement:** The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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