

## **Palaung in Contact with Shan and Burmese**

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### **Abstract**

Palaung is an Austroasiatic language of the Palaungic branch with so far three varieties, namely Rumai, Shwe and Ruching, that have been mentioned in the linguistic literature. The language, whose community includes some half a million people, is mainly spoken in Shan State in Myanmar, but also in adjacent regions in China and Thailand. The three varieties are not always spontaneously intelligible, as their lexicons and especially their grammatical morphemes differ to a considerable extent. As the database for Ruching is rather small, this paper will focus on Rumai, of which the present author has compiled a corpus on several field trips to Myanmar, and to a smaller extent on Shwe, for that two grammatical descriptions are available. Palaung has been considerably influenced by Shan, the dominant language in Shan State, and more recently by Burmese, the language of education since the introduction of the national school system in the 1960ties. In recent years, also many young Palaung people have gone to Mandalay and other places in the plain for further studies or for work, what has strengthened the Burmese influence on the language. The influence of the two contact languages concerns mainly lexical material and Shan words, as they were incorporated in the Palaung language a rather long time before Burmese words, are often seen as real Palaung. The research question of this paper is in what semantic and perhaps grammatical domains Palaung has replicated matter and patterns from the two dominant languages. There is the supposition that there is much more matter replication than pattern replication, as this is the usual way how languages borrow from donor languages that have a higher prestige than the recipient language, but in the case of Palaung also some pattern replication may be found, for example in the classifier system.