Bak ‘mouth’
PT *paːk DIL, PTK *paːk

Pittayaporn reconstructs PT *paːkD for this item (12). Thurgood reconstructs PKS *paːi1 (212).

This morpheme is found throughout the Zhuang-Bouyei speaking area, apart from a few localities where it seems to have been replaced by other morphemes. These localities are mostly in the northeast of Guangxi. Hangz (haːŋ2), original meaning ‘lower jaw’, is found in Sanjiang and Rong’an, and is recorded as co-occurring with bak in Hechi. Gauq (kaːu5) is found in Sanjiang, Rong’an, and Yishan (contemporary Yizhou 宜州); this latter morpheme is not listed in the ZHCH, but is possibly a Han borrowing from 口 kǒu ‘mouth’ (EMC kʰǝw’), the schoolhouse pronunciation of which is kau55. With the exception of Yishan, these areas fall outside the survey.

In other areas, paːk7 or paːk9 is the most common pronunciation. A short vowel -a- is recorded for two localities in eastern Yunnan: Guangnan south (Nung) and Yanshan. In fact, however, short -a- is common for this morpheme when it is used as an unstressed head for nominal phrases, as happens frequently in phrases indicating place or location.1 On this phenomenon, see Holm 2003: 152 on baek ‘place’. This shortening sometimes results in different characters being used to represent bak, e.g. 北 běi ‘north’, pronounced as baek (pek7).

Final -k is elided in Nandan in the north of Guangxi and in Qiubei in eastern Yunnan. In Guizhou Bouyei, only three areas retain final -k: the area around Libo, Sandu and Duyun in the southeast; localities along the Nanpanjiang River in the southern part of Xingyi and Anlong in the far southwest; and the area to the north of Anshun in west-central Guizhou. There is a transition zone stretching from Dushan in the southeast to Guiding and Huishui, in which a final glottal stop is retained. In all other areas -k is elided completely. The tone of the resulting syllable is assimilated mostly to Tone 5 but in Zhenning, Zhenfeng and Xingren to Tone 3.

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Sources: Traditional texts from survey locations.