

# ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

## Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2020-043 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2020-8-31

Primary Person submitting request: Agnes Conrad

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Names, affiliations and email addresses of additional supporters of this request:

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Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):

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Hezuo Road, Pidu District

Chengdu, Sichuan 611731

People's Republic of China

PLEASE NOTE: This completed form will become part of the public record of this change request and the history of the ISO 639-3 code set and will be posted on the ISO 639-3 website.

### Types of change requests

This form is to be used in requesting changes (whether creation, modification, or deletion) to elements of the *ISO 639 Codes for the representation of names of languages — Part 3: Alpha-3 code for comprehensive coverage of languages*. The types of changes that are possible are to 1) modify the reference information for an existing code element, 2) propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group; 3) retire a code element from use, including merging its scope of denotation into that of another code element, 4) split an existing code element into two or more new language code elements, or 5) create a new code element for a previously unidentified language variety. Fill out section 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 below as appropriate, and the final section documenting the sources of your information. The process by which a change is received, reviewed and adopted is summarized on the final page of this form.

Type of change proposed (check one):

1.  Modify reference information for an existing language code element
2.  Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group
3.  Retire a language code element from use (duplicate or non-existent)
4.  Expand the denotation of a code element through the merging one or more language code elements into it (retiring the latter group of code elements)
5.  Split a language code element into two or more new code elements (include here a request for a new code element for a divergent dialect of a major language)
6.  Create a code element for a previously unidentified language.

For proposing a change to an existing code element, please identify:

Affected ISO 639-3 identifier: mvm

Associated reference name: Minyag

## 1. Modify an existing language code element

(a) What are you proposing to change:

- Language reference name; generally this is changed only if it is erroneous; if usage is shifting to a new preferred form, the new form may be added (next box)
- Language additional names
- Language type (living, extinct, historical, etc.)
- Language scope (individual language or macrolanguage)

(b) What new value(s) do you propose:

(c) Rationale for change:

## 2. Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group

(a) For an existing Macrolanguage, what change to its individual language membership do you propose:

(b) Rationale for change:

For a new Macrolanguage proposal, please also complete the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”), which must also be submitted to fully document the intended meaning for the new macrolanguage.

## 3. Retire a language code element from use

(a) Reason for change:

- There is no evidence that the language exists.
- This is equivalent to another ISO 639-3 language.

(b) If equivalent with another code element, with which ISO 639-3 code element (identifier and name) is it equivalent:

(c) Rationale for change:

## 4. Expand the denotation of a code element through merging of one or more code elements

(a) List the languages (identifier and name) to be merged into this code element and retired from use:

(b) Rationale for change

## 5. Split a language code element into two or more code elements

- (a) List the languages into which this code element should be split, or the major language and the divergent variety (or varieties) for which a new code element is being requested:  
Western Minyag (presently includes both Eastern and Western under code mvm)  
Requesting to add a code for Eastern Minyag

By the language identification criteria set forth in ISO 639-3, the simple fact of distinct identities is not enough to assign separate identifiers. The criteria are defined in the standard as follows:

For this part of ISO 639, judgments regarding when two varieties are considered to be the same or different languages are based on a number of factors, including linguistic similarity, intelligibility, a common literature (traditional or written), a common writing system, the views of users concerning the relationship between language and identity, and other factors. The following basic criteria are followed:

- Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if users of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety) at a functional level.
  - Where intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be strong indicators that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language.
  - Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of well-established distinct ethnolinguistic identities can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages
- (b) Referring to the criteria given above, give the rationale for splitting the existing code element into two or more languages, or for requesting a separate identifier for the divergent variety:  
Eastern and Western Minyag are mutually unintelligible. Speakers of each variety cannot communicate with each other and there is no central variety which speakers of both varieties understand. Speakers of Eastern and Western Minyag communicate with each other using a third unrelated language, such as Mandarin. Analysis of the grammar reveals clear similarities but there is enough divergence in the lexicon and phonology to prevent even marginal, functional intelligibility. There is no written corpus or existing orthographic system employed for either language. Though the speakers in the Eastern area do feel a cultural, ethnolinguistic affinity with the Western speaking area--an idea which features prominently in Eastern Minyag oral histories--most speakers of Western Minyag are largely unaware of the existence of Eastern Minyag speakers and their proposed historical relation and are more quick to align themselves with mainstream Tibetan culture.
- (c) Does the existing language code element represent a major language in which there already exists a significant body of literature and research? Are there contexts in which all the proposed separate languages may still be considered the same language—as in having a common linguistic identity, a shared (or undistinguished) body of literature, a written form in common, etc.? Please comment.  
The existing language (Western Minyag: mvm) represents a marginal, endangered language for which there is a small, but growing body of research. The most extensive, publicly available documentation of the language was conducted by the Primary Requester through an ELDP grant. The Primary Requester and the additional supporter listed above also conducted documentation for Eastern Minyag through this grant, but there is

exceedingly little published research on Eastern Minyag. Eastern Minyag has been defacto considered a dialect of Western Minyag, but the Primary Requester believes this grouping to have occurred only as a result of a paucity of research. There are no situations where the proposed separate languages could be considered the same language at the current moment in time, though they are clearly historically related.

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted for each new identifier that is to be created. That step can be deferred until this form has been processed by the ISO 639-3 registrar, provided that sufficient information on the rationale is given in (b) above.

In the case of a minority language that has been considered in some contexts to be a dialect of a major language, yet is divergent enough to be unintelligible to speakers of the standard variety of the major language, it may be more beneficial for the users of the ISO 639-3 and 639-2 code sets to create a new code element for the divergent language variety without splitting the existing code element of the major language. The ISO 639-3 Registration Authority may make this determination when considering a request involving a major language and a highly distinct “dialect.” If such a course is followed, the rationale for the decision will be published in a comment by the Registration Authority on approval of the requested addition for the divergent variety.

## 6. Create a new language code element

- (a) Name of missing language:
- (b) State the case that this language is not the same as or has not been included within any language that already has an identifier in ISO 639-3:

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted to more fully document the new language.

## Sources of information

Please use whichever of the points below are relevant in order to document the sources on which you have based the above proposal.

- (a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:  
The Primary Requester and the additional supporter (a native speaker of Eastern Minyag) listed on these forms conducted documentation of Eastern Minyag through an ELDP Grant and are currently involved in continued documentation efforts through funding from the Firebird Foundation. The current request has been made on the basis of: 1) the Primary Requester's own fieldwork and linguistic analyses of both Eastern and Western Minyag, and 2) the additional supporter's fieldwork, personal experience, knowledge of linguistics, and interactions with speakers from Western Minyag.
- (b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:

(c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):

1) <https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI1175054>

(The collection has been submitted and is in the process of being uploaded under two separate collections. One for Eastern Minyag 0637 and one for Western Minyag: 0539.)

The requesters are aware of only three published works which consider Eastern Minyag as a language separate from Western Minyag. All other existing research focuses on Western Minyag.

All of these works Eastern Minyag works are in Chinese. Translations have been provided by the requesters:

2) Sun Hongkai, *The Study of the Qiangic Languages of the Tibeto-Burman Language Family*. Chinese Social Sciences Press, 2016.

孙宏开:《藏缅语族羌语支研究》[M]中国社会科学出版社, 2016.

(A word list for Eastern Minyag)

3) Yin Weibin, "Spatial Relations in Muya," in *Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Collected Works on Ethnology and Anthropology*. Social Sciences Academic Press, 2012.

尹蔚彬:《木雅语空间关系的表述》, 独著, 载《中国社科院民族学与人类学研究所青年学术论坛文集》, [N]社会科学文献出版社, 2012。

4) Yin Weibin, "The Spatial and Topological Relations in Muya," in *Journal of Guizhou Institute of Applied Engineering Technology*, 2017 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.

尹蔚彬:《木雅语的空间拓扑关系》贵州工程应用技术学院学报 [J] 2017 年 4 期。

## The change proposal process

A request to change the code set goes through a six-step process:

1. A user of ISO 639-3 proposes a change and submits it to the ISO 639-3 Registration Authority (ISO 639-3/RA) using this form.
2. The ISO 639-3 registrar processes the change request to verify that the request is compatible with the criteria set forth in the standard and to ensure that the submitter has supplied all necessary information. This may involve rounds of interaction with the submitter.
3. When the change request proposal is complete in its documentation (including all associated New Code Requests), the change request is promoted to "Proposed Change" status and the ISO 639-3 registrar posts the request on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA. Also at this time, an announcement is sent to anyone requesting notification of new proposals matching their specified criteria (region and/or language family of interest). Periodically, a message may be sent to the general LINGUIST discussion list on Linguist List (<http://linguistlist.org/issues/index.html>), and other appropriate discussion lists, inviting individuals to review and comment on pending proposals. Anyone may request from the ISO 639-3 registrar to receive notification regarding proposals involving languages in a specific region of the world or specific language family.
4. Individuals may send comments to the ISO 639-3 registrar for compilation. The consensus of early reviews may result in promotion to "Candidate Status" (with or without amendment), or withdrawal of the change request, if the conclusion is that the request is not in keeping with the stated criteria of the ISO 639-3 standard.

5. Three months prior to the end of the annual cycle of review and update, a new notice is posted on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA, and an announcement listing the Candidate Status Change Requests is posted to the LINGUIST discussion list and other discussion lists, as requested by their owners. All change requests are then open to further review and comment by any interested party for a period of three months. A Change Request received after the start of Candidacy phase must wait until the next annual cycle for consideration. The purpose of this phase is to ensure that a minimum of three months is allotted for the review of every proposal.
6. At the end of the formal review period, a given Change Request may be: 1) adopted as a whole; 2) adopted in part (specific changes implicit in the whole Change Request may be adopted separately); 3) rejected as a whole; or 4) amended and resubmitted for the next review cycle. All change requests remain permanently archived at the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA.

**Please return this form to:**

ISO 639-3 Registrar  
SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems  
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road  
Dallas, Texas 75236 USA  
ISO 639-3/RA web site: <http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/>  
E-mail: [iso639-3@sil.org](mailto:iso639-3@sil.org)

An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

**Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:**

Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/> .

Linguist List. Ancient and Extinct Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfAncientLgs.html>

Linguist List. Constructed Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html>