

THE INEXPLICABILITY PRINCIPLE AND RECOGNITION OF
GENETIC RELATIONSHIP:
TO SOLVE THE CONTROVERSY OF SINO-TAI ‘FIVE’ AND ‘SIX’

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ABSTRACT

The Inexplicability Principle has been proposed as one part of the Distillation method in Wang (2006). It means the inability to describe a recipient language in terms of the phonological system of the donor language. Since the related morphemes originate either from borrowing or from inheritance, the inexplicable elements from borrowing are considered to be inherited from the ancestor language. In its application to Sino-Tai numerals, some puzzle appears. For instance, Tai *haC ‘five’ is related to Old Chinese (OC) *ŋaŋx ‘five’, but the initial *h- in Tai cannot be borrowed from *ŋ- in OC. Therefore, it seems that they must be inherited from Proto-Sino-Tai **hŋ- and independently developed into *h- and *ŋ-. That means Sino-Tai related numeral ‘five’ is inherited. However, Chen (2007) and other scholars provided more evidence to confirm that Tai *haC ‘five’ has been borrowed from Chinese. To resolve

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不可释原则与语源鉴别—— 解决汉台关系语素‘五’和‘六’的争议

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提要

不可释原则是还原比较法的一个组成部分(Wang 2006),指无法以施借语言的音韵系统来解释受借语言中关系语素的表现,这些不可解释的成分应该视为祖语的遗传,而不是借用的结果。在应用该原则到汉台数词时,出现了一些争议。例如,台语的 *haC ‘五’对应上古汉语的 *ŋagx ‘五’,而台语的声母 *h- 不可能借自上古汉语的 *ŋ-。因此,它们应该都源自原始汉台语的 **hŋ-,各自发展出 *h-和 *ŋ-。这就是意味着汉台关系语素‘五’是同源词。但是,陈保亚(2007)等举出更多的证据来说明台语的 *haC ‘五’借自汉语。为了解决这一争议,本文检视了汉台关系语素‘五’和‘六’的语音发展,发现不可释原则的运用受制于我们对于所比较的语言史之了解。不可释原则在语源研究中可用,但要注意其限度。

关键词

不可释原则 汉台比较 五 六