

ESTABLISHING GENETIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE FAMILIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ON A MORE SOLID LINGUISTIC BASIS

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ABSTRACT

This is an evaluation of the various hypotheses regarding the possible genetic relationships between different language families in Southeast Asia, including Sino-Tai, Austro-Tai, Austro-Kra-Dai, Austric, Sino-Austronesian, and Sino-Miao-Yao. In order to establish reliable genetic relations between different language families, we need more solid linguistic evidence to distinguish between true cognates and loanwords. Vocabulary gets borrowed easily, whereas morphology is the most resistant to change. The genetic relationship between Chinese and Tibetan-Burman languages is well established, and perhaps so are Austric and Austro-Tai or Austro-Kra-Dai. However, there is not much chance for the genetic relationships of Sino-Tai, Sino-Austronesian or Sino-Miao-Yao.

KEYWORDS

Genetic relations Language family Southeast Asia True cognates
Loans

1. INTRODUCTION¹

The language families in Southeast Asia include (1) Sino-Tibetan, (2) Kam-Tai, (3) Austroasiatic, (4) Austronesian, and (5) Miao-Yao. There

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