

THE PROTO-YAO INITIALS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YAO AND CHINESE

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ABSTRACT

This study makes use of data from eight Yao dialects to reconstruct the initial system of Proto-Yao. Compared with previous studies, the strict sound correspondences (pervasive and complete sound correspondence) are established in this paper to exclude chance resemblance. Then, the initial system of Proto-Yao is reconstructed based on the principle of the comparative method. It is worth noting that the hierarchy of proto-forms is distinguished according to the stringency of sound correspondence, which is necessary for us to examine the proto-form's time depth and how strongly it is supported by sound correspondence. Based on the reconstruction, some tantalizing issues are discussed including the development of prenasalized initials of Proto-Miao-Yao, three-way distinction of sonorants, six sets of obstruents between Proto-Yao and Proto-Min, and the genetic relationship between Yao and Chinese.

KEYWORDS

Yao language Sound correspondence Initial system Reconstruction
Chinese

Acknowledgments This work was funded by Ministry of Education of China (No.17JJD740001) and National Social Science Fund of China (No.16FYY016).

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