

The aberrancy of the Jiamao dialect of Hlai: speculation on its origins and history¹

Graham Thurgood
California State University at Fresno

0. Introduction. The aberrancy of Jiamao was already apparent to the authors of the invaluable *Survey of the Li (=Hlai) languages* (Ouyang and Zheng 1983), a survey providing the first modern data on Jiamao along with data on nine other dialects of Hlai. Matisoff (1988:289), in a paper based on the data in the Ouyang and Zheng survey, wrote that he left “the Jiamao 加茂 dialect out of consideration almost entirely, due to its extreme (and apparently unsystematic) aberrancy with respect to others.”

Jiamao is subgrouped outside of the rest of Hlai, that is, outside of all nine dialects recorded in Ouyang and Zheng (1983)—Baoding, Xifang, Zhongsha, Heitu, Baisha Yuanmen, Tongshi, Qiandui, and Baocheng, outside of “Cun” speech (Ouyang and Fu 1988; Fu 1983), outside of Natou (Fu 1990), and outside of the two dialects recorded by Savina (1931). A detailed examination of the Jiamao correspondences did nothing more than further document what Jim had termed Jiamao’s “extreme (and apparently unsystematic) aberrancy.” The Jiamao tones do not correspond with the tones of proto-Hlai at all. The Jiamao initials and finals correspond, but with a pervasive, unsystematic irregularity that raised more questions than it answered. The Jiamao initials often have two relatively-frequent unconditioned reflexes, with other less-frequent reflexes thrown in apparently randomly. The more comparative work that was done, the more obvious it became that a comparative approach was not going to explain the “extreme (and apparently unsystematic) aberrancy” of Jiamao.

An explanation of the Jiamao data suggested itself immediately when Ni Dabai told me that the Jiamao were Hui, that is, Muslims, who originally came to Hainan in two waves, the first in 986 A.D. and 988 A.D. and the second in 1486.

What Ni Dabai's comment suggested to me was that the Jiamao might have learned Hlai only after arriving in Hainan. The newcomers came speaking an Austroasiatic register language,² only learning Hlai after arrival. Analyzing the new language in terms of their own register language, the newcomers appear to have ignored the pitch qualities of the tones completely, focussing instead on phonation features co-occurring with certain initials. Those Hlai initials co-occurring with a marked phonation type—probably ‘creaky’ phonation—led to the “low” tones of modern Jiamao and those Hlai initials occurring with what was perceived as having an unmarked, clear phonation led to the “high” tones (see Figure 2).³

1. Jiamao's multiple reflexes of proto-Hlai initials. One reflection of Jiamao speakers having learned Hlai as a second language is that there are multiple, unconditioned reflexes of proto-Hlai initials. Although in certain cases it may be impossible to tell exactly how many reflexes a given proto-initial may have in Jiamao, it is at least clear that individual initials have either one statistically predominant reflex or two statistically predominant reflexes.

Proto-Hlai initial	major Jiamao reflexes	number	additional Jiamao reflexes	number
*ɗ-	t-	11	ʈ-	2
	d-	9	ts-	1
			h-	1
			l-	1
*ɓ-	p-	6	v-	3
	b-	5	f-	2
			tsh-	1

Figure 1a: The Jiamao reflexes of proto-Hlai *ɗ- and *ɓ-

The Jiamao reflexes of proto-Hlai *ɗ- and *ɓ- are quite typical in this respect (Figure 1a). Both of these initials have two major reflexes—voiced and voiceless stops—as well as a handful of other reflexes.

The remaining well-attested initials can be similarly analyzed with the major division being between proto-initials with just one predominant reflex (Figure 1b) and proto-initials with two predominant, unconditioned reflexes (Figure 1c).

<u>PHlai</u>	<u>Jiamao</u>	<u>PHlai</u>	<u>Jiamao</u>
Initials group (a):		Initials group (d):	
*ʔ-	ʔ-	*rʔ-	l-
*k-	k-	*lyʔ-	ts-
*kh-	kh-		
Initials group (b):		Initials group (e):	
*ɬʔ-	ɬ-	*ŋ-	ŋ-
*s-	tsh-	*n-	n-
*pl-	l-	*m-	m-
*sr-	t-	*l-	l-
*hnʔ-	h- / ___*o:n; z- / ___*-a		
Initials group (c):		Initials group (f):	
*ɟʔ-	k-	*wʔ-	v-
*ʃʔ-	k-	*w-	v-
*ʃwʔ-	k-	*y-	ts-

Figure 1b: Proto-initials with largely invariant Jiamao reflexes

Complicating the interpretation of these patterns is the fact that arriving Hlai undoubtedly learned, not proto-Hlai but instead one or more so far unidentified daughter languages. Most likely, the Jiamao learned at least two daughter languages, the first learned by those who migrated in 986 A.D. and 988 A.D. and the second by those who migrated in 1486—some 500 years later. Undoubtedly, in part the existence of unconditioned multiple reflexes simply reflects the fact that the Jiamao arrived in two separate migrations.

<u>PHlai</u>	<u>Jiamao</u>		<u>PHlai</u>	<u>Jiamao</u>	
	1st	2nd		1st	2nd
Initials group (a):			Initials group (b):		
*t-	t-	tsh-	*hrjw?-	h-	4 others
*p-	p-	f-			
*ts-	ts-	tsh-	Initials group (d):		
*d-	t-	d-	*ŋ?-	k-	ŋ-
*ɸ-	p-	b-	*n?-	t-	n-
*th-	th-	d-	*m?-	p-	m-
*ph-	ph-	b-	*pr?-	l-	v-
*tsh-	tsh-	t-			
*h-	h-	z-	Initials group (e):		
			*ŋw-	n-; ñ-; ŋ-	
				(1 each)	
			*ñ-	ñ-	n-

Figure 1c: Proto-initials with two predominant Jiamao reflexes

Finally, in addition to the diversity already discussed, there are a large number of even more irregular forms, suggesting the type of incomplete learning that might be expected of a first generation of second language learners who never achieved a high degree of mastery over the new language.

2.0 The origins of Jiamao tones.

2.1 Proto-Hlai tones. Three proto-tones are reconstructed for Hlai non-stopped syllables. These three proto-tones do not correlate at all with the tones of modern Jiamao.

2.2 Tone splits and Hlai initial classes. Subsequent to the breakup of proto-Hlai, tonal splits conditioned by six classes of proto-Hlai initials occurred in several of the modern Hlai languages, Yuanmen (=YM), Tongshi (=TS), Qiandui (=QD), Baocheng (=BC), Cun, and Natou. These splits occurred in all three proto-tones and in the stopped syllables (see Thurgood 1991). The patterns for these tonal splits can be illustrated by the reflexes of proto-Hlai tone