

A Phonological Study of the Tujia Language

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Abstract

This thesis studies the phonological characteristics of Tujia. For the data used in this thesis, the author divided it into three kinds: newly-borrowed words, Tujia-Chinese compound words, and Tujia own words. The correspondences of initials, finals, and tones between the northern and southern dialects of Tujia are discussed. For the initial consonants, the author argues that two palatalization processes took place in the history of Tujia, one is complete while the other is still in progress. For the finals of the southern and the northern dialects, the author discusses the changes that vowel [o] and vowel [a] underwent in the two dialects, the development of vowel [y], the loss of stop endings, and the disappearance and the reappearance of nasal endings. For the tones, the author argues that the pitch patterns of South-west Mandarin have infected the Tujia tonal system when splitting, and proposes a **tonal neutralization** and a **high-low** rule to explain the Tujia tone sandhi. The Tujia synchronic variations and diachronic sound changes are also discussed. In the area of Tujia morphology, the author discovers the remnant of the use of tonal inflections for the marking of cases in personal pronouns and the inflections of aspiration and non-aspiration in negation, and provides a series of evidence. For Tujia subgrouping, the author proposes that Tujia is **an independent sub-branch** among Tibeto-Burman languages.