

Synchronic and diachronic phonology of Lavïa

A Wa language of Yunnan and Myanmar

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Lavïa, spoken in a belt across both sides of the Yunnan-Myanmar border, is an under-researched Wa language falling under the Waic subgroup of Palaungic in the Austroasiatic language family. This study investigates the sound system of Lavïa and traces its development from an ancestral Proto-Wa-Lawa phonological system. Modern Lavïa phonology is characterized by well-preserved sesquisyllabic structure, rich inventories of consonant and vocalic clusters, and lack of phonemic tone or phonation. Diachronically, Lavïa shows widely attested Waic sound changes as well as certain distinctive innovations which, among other things, yielded voiceless nasals and caused huge upheavals in its vocalic system. These diagnostic innovations help define Lavïa's unique position within the Wa language cluster.

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