Diverse sources and an internal foundation for voiced onsets in Northern Mǐn

Jonathan Smith
Christopher Newport University

The voiced onsets and associated tonal reflexes of Northern Mǐn (NM), motivation for Norman’s (1973; 1974) proto-Mǐn “softened” stops and affricates, remain a subject of controversy. Following a brief introduction (§ 1), I begin by reviewing the various apparent sources of voiced onsets in NM, including old complex onsets, non-Sinitic substrate, voicing alternations, and late koine material (§ 2). I then take up Akitani’s (2008) colloquial glossary of Shībēi 石陂 and Norman’s (1969) of Jiànyáng 建陽, outlining on this basis an adjusted account of the subgroup’s development: pre-PNM preserved early Sinitic voiced onsets in Tone A2, with a conditioned split isolating voiced stops in so-called Yángpíng yǐ 陽平乙, here “A2+” (§ 3). It was this conservative feature which allowed items in § 2 to take on voiced onsets across tonal categories, at times leading to further splits. A conclusion considers Mǐn more generally, proposing that the voicing alternants of Huang Chin-wen (2001a) may be NM reflections of group-wide tone sandhi processes (§ 4).

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