

Thesis Title	Proto-Hlai Vowel System
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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to reconstruct a Proto-Hlai vowel system. The reconstruction is based on data from 11 main dialects and supported by three other dialects.

The study shows that the Proto-Hlai vowel system contains nine simple vowels, i.e. three high vowels: \*-i, \*-u- , \*-u- ; three mid vowels: \*-e-, \*-ɤ-, \*-o-, plus a schwa \*-ə-, \*-ɐ- and one low vowel: \*-a-. In addition, there can be glide medials (\*-w- or \*-j-) preceding some proto vowels which have an effect on the development of those vowels in certain dialects. The noteworthiness of the system is the lack of vowel length contrast and diphthongs, assumed to be common features in related languages such as Tai or Kam sui.

The important vowel changes from Proto-Hlai to modern dialects are the lengthening of high and low vowels and the successive shift of mid vowels in some dialects. The dialects that adopt these main changes are grouped as Southern Hlai while those that do not are grouped as Northern Hlai.