Answer key to exercise on xiéshēngzì 5

Study the following sets of xiéshēngzì, and answer the questions below

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 各gè格gé恪kè | 落luò洛luò駱luò |
| 尷gān監jiān鑑jiàn | 藍lán籃lán濫làn |
| 龐páng | 龍lóng |
| 謙qiān兼jiān | 廉lián簾lián |

1. Identify the common component for each set

各監龍兼

1. In terms of the place of articulation of the initials in each group, what places of articulation are there in each set?

Group 1: g/k are velar; l is alveolar lateral

Group 2: g is velar; j is palatal; l is alveolar lateral

Group 3: p is labial; l is alveolar lateral

Group 4: q/j are palatal; l is alveolar lateral

1. What is the principle of using xiéshēngzì for studying Old Chinese initials?

The characters that belong to the same xiéshēngzì series should have the same place of articulation for their initials.

1. If you put your answers to question 2 and question 3 together, what conclusion can you draw?

Since the two columns in each set do not have the same place of articulation, they should have been more similar in Old Chinese. However the possibility of g/k/j/q/p all becoming l or l diverging into all these different sounds is highly unusual if it had been the case. Therefore an alternative possibility is that all these characters had a consonant cluster as their initial in Old Chinese. For example, all of the characters in row one could have had gl- or kl- as their initials in Old Chinese. The characters in group 3 could have had pl- as their initial. The initials j and q in Group 2 and Group 4 are results of palatalization of velars, as has been shown in Question 6 of Exercise on xiéshēngzì 2.