The typology of Sinitic languages from the perspective of Mainland Southeast Asia

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Sinitic languages

 IDEOGRAPHIC

A branch of the Sino-Tibetan family;

 IDEOGRAPHIC

Descendents of Old Chinese;

 Old Chinese

(Middle Chinese)

“Chinese dialects”

c.f. 方言 fāngyán;

 IDEOGRAPHIC

Diversity often compared with, e.g. Romance, Germanic.

e.g. Oracle bone script 14th–11th C BCE

e.g. Book of Odes mostly 11th to 8th C BCE
Sinitic languages

(Ten main groups in the Language Atlas of China; Würm et. al 1988)

Typological zones surrounding Sinitic

- **Verb-final** zone
- **Verb-medial** zone
- **Verb-initial** zone

**Language Families**

- Japanese
- Korean
- Tungusic Ings.
- Mongolic Ings.
- Turkic Ings.
- Sarikoli *Tocharian
- Tibeto- Burman Ings.
- Ryuukyuan
- Tibeto- Burman Ings.

*Boundaries approximate*
Austro-Asiatic
Sino-Tibetan
Kra-Dai (Tai-Kadai)
Austronesian
Hmong-Mien (Miao-Yao)
Indo-European
North Asian SOV

Tungusic, Mongolic, Turkic, Korean, Japanese-Ryukyuan...

Generally:
• SOV;
• polysyllabic/agglutinative,
• usually no tones, or simpler word tone systems;
• strong right-headedness;
• case markers common.

e.g. Uyghur
مەن لەغەمەن يېيمەن
mæn læyмаen yæ-y-mæn
1SG läghmän eat-NPST-1SG
‘I eat läghmän’

Mainland SE Asian SVO

Hmong-Mien, Kra-Dai, Mon-Khmer, Bai, Karen...

Generally:
• SVO;
• sesquisyllabic or monosyllabic; analytic;
• phona@on contrasts and/or more complex syllable tone systems.
• stronger left-headedness;
• case markers rare;
• “aspect prominent”;
• more classifiers.

e.g. Thai
ผมกินข้าว
pʰɔm kīn kʰáaw
1SG eat rice
The hybrid typology of Sinitic in general

Mainland SE Asia-ness:
- SVO;
- monosyllabic, analytic;
- tonal;
- VOVO-type serial verb constructions;
- “aspect prominent”;
- prepositions.

North Asian-ness:
- strongly right-headed NPs;
- obliques mostly pre-verbal;
- object preposing constructions;
- postpositions.
Rare cooccurrence of features

SVO and Rel N  SVO and Oblq V
wals.info/feature/96A  wals.info/feature/84A

(Regionally rare:) VO and Adj N
wals.info/feature/97A

e.g. Cantonese:

我 頭先 嘴 條 河 道 見倒 [你 唔見 吱] 咅 隻 羊。

ngo⁵ tau¹sin¹ hai² tiu¹ ho¹ dou⁶ gin³tou² [nei⁵ m⁴gin³ zo²] go² zek³ joeng⁴

1SG just_now LOC CL river LOC see 2SG lost PRV that CL goat

‘I saw the goat that you lost at the river just now.’
“Original” word order

Theory 1 — Proto Sino-Tibetan was SOV:

- [supposedly] The further back, the more OV traits in Chinese (Li & Thompson 1974:208);

- Tibeto-Burman languages are largely SOV; by extension PrST also SOV (LaPolla 1994, Matisoff 1994).


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Theory 2 — Proto Sino-Tibetan was SVO:

(Djamouri, Paul & Whitman 2007; also Benedict 1994’s reservations.)

- The further back, the less OV traits in Chinese;

- Old Chinese and PrTB are both reconstructed as predominantly prefixing, strongly correlating with VO;

- Mru, of which SVO is not apparently result of contact.


Syllable structure and tones

Old Chinese (e.g. Baxter & Sagart “2011”):
\((\text{C(ə)-})\text{C}^{(\ddagger)}\text{(r)V(C)(ʔ)(-s)})\)
e.g. 二 *nijs ‘two’, c.f. Written Tibetan ལགོས gnyis ‘two’

Middle Chinese (e.g. Baxter 1992)
\(\text{C(j)(w)V(C)}^{\text{TONE}}\)

3+1 tones:
*LEVEL, *RISING, *DEPARTING, *ENTERING

### Example: Standard Cantonese tones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>*level  平</th>
<th>*rising 上</th>
<th>*departing 去</th>
<th>*entering 入</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*VOICELESS</td>
<td>˥</td>
<td>˧</td>
<td>˥</td>
<td>˩&lt;sub&gt;S&lt;/sub&gt;, ˩&lt;sub&gt;L&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*VOICED</td>
<td>˩</td>
<td>˧</td>
<td>˩</td>
<td>˩</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Example: Standard Mandarin tones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>*level  平</th>
<th>*rising 上</th>
<th>*departing 去</th>
<th>(*entering 入)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*VOICELESS</td>
<td>˩</td>
<td>˨&lt;sup&gt;(random)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>˨&lt;sup&gt;(random)&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>(random)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*VOICED sonorant</td>
<td>˩</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>˩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*VOICED obstruent</td>
<td>˩</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>˩</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3+1 tones:

Middle Chinese;
Proto Bai;
Various branches of Kra-Dai;
Proto Hmong-Mien;
Proto Việt–Mường;

Proto Lolo-Burmese;
Proto Karen;
### e.g. Standard Central Thai tones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>*A</th>
<th>*B</th>
<th>*C</th>
<th>*D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*aspirated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*unaspirated/</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*GLOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*VOICED</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### e.g. Northern Vietnamese tones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>*VOICELESS</th>
<th>*VOICED sonorant</th>
<th>*VOICED obstruent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
Sinitic languages

『Ten main groups in the Language Atlas of China;

“Unclassified”:』
Diversity of Sinitic languages

Hashimoto (e.g. 1976, 1986) north-south opposition, areal influence.
In the north:
- less tones;
- less codas;
- longer words;
- less classifiers;
- more OV traits.


less tones in the north

Turkic/Mongolic/Tungusic: no tones

Middle Chinese 3+1 tones
Mandarin:
Běijīng Mandarin 4+0 tones; NW Mandarin 4+0 or 3+0 tones
Hónggǔ, Gānsū 2+0 tones; Old Nánjīng Mandarin 4+1 tones

Wú:
Sūzhōu 6+2 tones; Shànghǎi 3+2 tones; Wǔjiāng 9+3 tones

Yuè: Standard Cantonese 6+3 tones; Zhōngshān 4+2 tones
Southern Pinghua, e.g. Nánning Shàngyáo 7+4 tones

Kam: 9+3 tones
Central Thai: 5+3 tones
Northern Vietnamese: 6+2 tones
less codas in the north

Turkic/Mongolic: all kinds of codas
Tungusic: -n

(only looking at non-glide codas)
Middle Chinese: -p -t -k -m -n -ŋ

Standard Mandarin: -n -ŋ
Wú: generally -N and -ʔ
Xiāng: generally -n and ~
Eastern Mín: -ŋ and -ʔ (-k/-ʔ)

Standard Cantonese, Hakka: -m -n -ŋ -p -t -k
Nanchang Gàn: -n -ŋ -t -k
Standard Southern Mín: -m -n -ŋ ~ -p -t -k -ʔ

Central Thai, Northern Vietnamese: -m -n -ŋ -p -t -k
longer words in the north

Mandarin
十 shí ‘ten’, 識 shí ‘know’, 石 shí ‘stone’, 時 shí ‘time’...

(c.f. Cantonese
十 sap⁶ ‘ten’, 識 sik¹ ‘know’, 石 sek⁶ ‘stone’, 時 si⁴ ‘time’...)

Mandarin
十 shí ‘ten’,
認識 rènshi recognise-know,
石頭 shítóu stone-head,
時候 shíhòu time-wait...
less classifiers in the north

wals.info/feature/55A

Turkic/Mongolic/Tungusic: no classifiers;

Classifier become compulsory in late Middle Chinese (c.a. 1100 CE)

Mainland Southeast Asia: similar amount of classifiers as modern Southern Sinitic languages.

Northern Mandarin: classifiers lost due to the expending use of the general classifier 个/个 gè. (most extreme: ᶙ is the only classifier left in Dungan.)
more OV traits in the north

PP are mostly preverbal in Sinitic languages.

Many Northern Mandarin dialects have all PPs preverbal.

Older Běijīng Mandarin:
到北京去
daò Běijīng qù
to Beijing go

c.f.
Shanghainese  tʂʰi pɔʔtɛiŋ
Cantonese  heoi³ bak¹ging¹去北京

Thai  pāj pàkkìng ไปปักกิ่ง
Vietnamese  đi  Bắc Kinh
go  Beijing
more OV traits in the north

Actual SOV Sinitic languages:
e.g. 西寧 Xīníng, 河州 Hézhōu (臨夏 Línxià), 唐汪 Tángwàng

(Xining Mandarin
Dede 2007:867)

more OV traits in the north

Object preposing construction
(a.k.a. disposal construction, BA construction)
marker often grammaticalised from ‘take’

Standard Mandarin:
我吃了三個蘋果
wǒ chī le sān ge píngguo
1SG eat PFV three CL apple
‘I ate three apples.’

我把那個蘋果吃了
wǒ bǎ nà ge píngguo chī le
1SG OBJ that CL apple eat PRF
‘I ate that apple.’
more OV traits in the north

Object preposing construction

Exists in Standard Cantonese: 將 \textit{zoeng}^{1}
but rarely used in Yue, Pinghua and Hakka in Guangdong

Standard Cantonese
我食咗啲個蘋果
\textipa{ngo\textsuperscript{5} sik\textsuperscript{6} zo\textsuperscript{2} go\textsuperscript{2} go\textsuperscript{3} ping\textsuperscript{4} gwo\textsuperscript{2}}
1SG eat PFV that CL apple
‘I ate that apple.’
Some other areal traits

Give
(a story of making conclusions too quickly)
Hashimoto (1986):
North: give IO DO
  e.g. Mandarin  ㄍㄟ n ㄧ ㄧ ㄧ 二 ᾱ 本 书
        give 2SG one CL book
South: give DO IO
  e.g. Shanghai  ㄕㄕㄕ ㄕㄕ ㄕ ㄕ ㄕ ㄕ
    Cantonese  ㄆㄧ ㄆㄣ ㄕㄢ ㄕ ㄕ
        give CL book 2SG
  c.f. Thai  หำ นำหงสุนผ  คน  ให้ หนังสือคุณ
            give book 2SG
Some other areal traits

Problems with ‘give’ as an example of north-south dichotomy in Sinitic

The ‘northern’ pattern of give IO DO is found in Min languages (and also in, e.g. Vietnamese).

Taiwanese  ho˧˥ wa˨˦ tʃĩ˨˥
Mandarin  gěi wǒ qián
Vietnamese  cho tôi tiền
          give 1sg money
Some other areal traits

Problems with ‘give’ as an example of north-south dichotomy in Sinitic

In many Southern languages, only ‘give’ and semantically similar verbs has the DO IO order; other ditransitive verbs have the IO DO order

Cantonese  bei$^{2}$ pun$^{2}$ syu$^{1}$ keoi$^{5}$  (give DO IO)
give CL book 3SG

   fat$^{6}$ keoi$^{5}$ jat$^{1}$ baak$^{3}$ man$^{1}$  (others IO DO)
penalise 3SG one hundred dollar
Some other areal traits

Problems with ‘give’ as an example of north-south dichotomy in Sinitic

In Tai languages, the most commonly used ‘give’ construction is a serial verb construction.

Northern Zhuang
hawj di hawj gou
give bit give 1sg
‘give me some’
(blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4c0e14890100bnsm.html; 18 Jan 2012)
Some other areal traits
Zhāng (2011)
Towards the end of Middle Chinese, 與 IO DO was phased out (but preserved in Min, Jin)
In the North, lexical replacement: 給 IO DO
(also, Altaic influence does not encourage SVC)
In the South, serial verb construction, e.g.
- take DO give IO
- take DO go IO
- give DO give IO
- give DO go IO etc.
(and some further developed into give DO IO)

Some other areal traits

‘give’, object preposing and passive

In the south, the following are common:
take to → give → causative → passive
take → object preposing

Hángzhōu (http://baike.baidu.com/view/565743.htm; 19 Feb 2012)
乒乓球 比赛，小张 拨 小李 打败-特
pingpong competition Xiaozhang Xiaoli defeat-ed
‘Xiaozhang defeated Xiaoli’ or
‘Xiaozhang was defeated by Xiaoli’
(passive must be agented)