

## The diachrony of mixed directionality in Sino-Tibetan: RelN & VO in Caijia and Longjia

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The cross-linguistic study of word order patterns has found strong correlations between the relative position of object (O) and verb (V) with respect to other features (e.g., Dryer 2007). For instance, languages with VO order usually also have externally headed relative clauses (Rel) that follow the head noun (N). On the contrary, the combination of prenominal relative clauses with VO order is uncommon and only found in varieties of Chinese, Bai, and Austronesian, all of which are spoken in Southeast Asia (e.g., Comrie 2008, Dryer 2008).

This talk reports the same combination of RelN & VO in two unclassified Sino-Tibetan languages in Southwest China called Caijia (Lü 2020) and Longjia (see 1a, 1b).

(1) Longjia

- a. [mo<sup>55</sup> ɛt<sup>55</sup>]                      ηuŋ<sup>55</sup> [mɛ<sup>31</sup> i<sup>55</sup> ku<sup>33</sup>]  
3SG family have horse one CLF  
'His/her family has a horse.' (Zhang & Li 1982: 2(2))
- b. [a<sup>55</sup> kɛ<sup>33</sup> ku<sup>31</sup>]                      la<sup>31</sup>wo<sup>55</sup>  
take chicken ATTR eagle  
'an eagle that takes a chicken' (Zhang & Li 1982: 5(3))

These two languages offer a unique possibility to investigate this cross-linguistically rare phenomenon. The first part of this talk presents a brief synchronic description of the relevant features and points out similarities and differences between the two languages. For instance, both languages also have examples of OV order, the object being marked with a grammaticalized form of the verb for 'to take' (Longjia a<sup>55</sup>, Caijia a<sup>33</sup>). But Caijia, instead of ku<sup>31</sup>, uses a marker sɿ<sup>21</sup> for the integration of the relative clause into the noun phrase.

The second part presents a brief comparison with other languages of the area that show RelN & VO, such as Bai (e.g., Xu & Zhao 1984, Wang 2012) and Southwestern Mandarin (e.g., Ming Chao Gui 2000, Ming Shengrong 2007, personal elicitation). For instance, Mandarin shares the marked OV order using the verb bǎ 'to take' as an object marker. Unlike Mandarin, however, the two languages do not use the marker of the relative clause as a genitive for which there is a separate form (Longjia huŋ<sup>31</sup>, Caijia hm<sup>55</sup> or yuŋ<sup>55</sup> in Bo 2004).

The third and final part is a detailed diachronic analysis of the phenomenon. Since the two languages are not historically attested, the diachronic development must be inferred and reconstructed from the synchronic data. For this purpose, different hypotheses are formulated and evaluated. For instance, prenominal relative clauses could be a retention while the languages underwent a change from OV to VO order (e.g., Dryer 2008, 2017). Such a change would be expected to be also visible in other parts of the language, which is why this talk will also address further features such as prepositions and their diachrony (e.g., Dryer 2019).

Alternatively, the languages could have always been of the VO type. In this case, prenominal relative clauses could either have been inherited, implying a certain diachronic stability of the RelN & VO type, or could have been calqued from Chinese or a language with the more common RelN & OV order. This last point is intimately connected with the unresolved classification of Caijia and Longjia. Tentatively arguing for diachronic stability,

this talk presents evidence that (1) both languages appear to be closely related (e.g., regular sound correspondences, shared syntactic features) and (2) they could be archaic members of the Sinitic family (e.g., retention of Old Chinese laterals, Baxter & Sagart 2014: 109).

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