



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

Hilário de Sousa

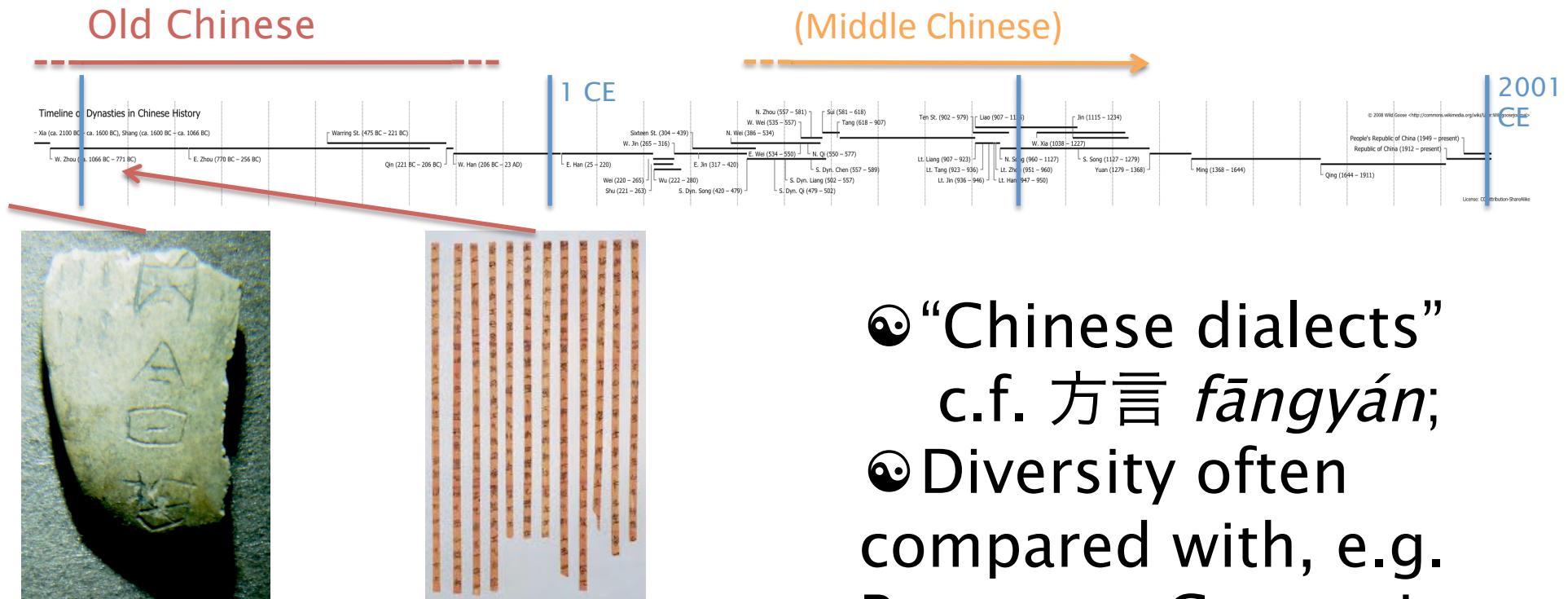
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Sinitic languages

- ☯ A branch of the Sino-Tibetan family;
- ☯ Descendents of Old Chinese;

Old Chinese



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



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

- ☯ “Chinese dialects”
c.f. 方言 *fāngyán*;
- ☯ Diversity often compared with, e.g. Romance, Germanic.

Sinitic languages



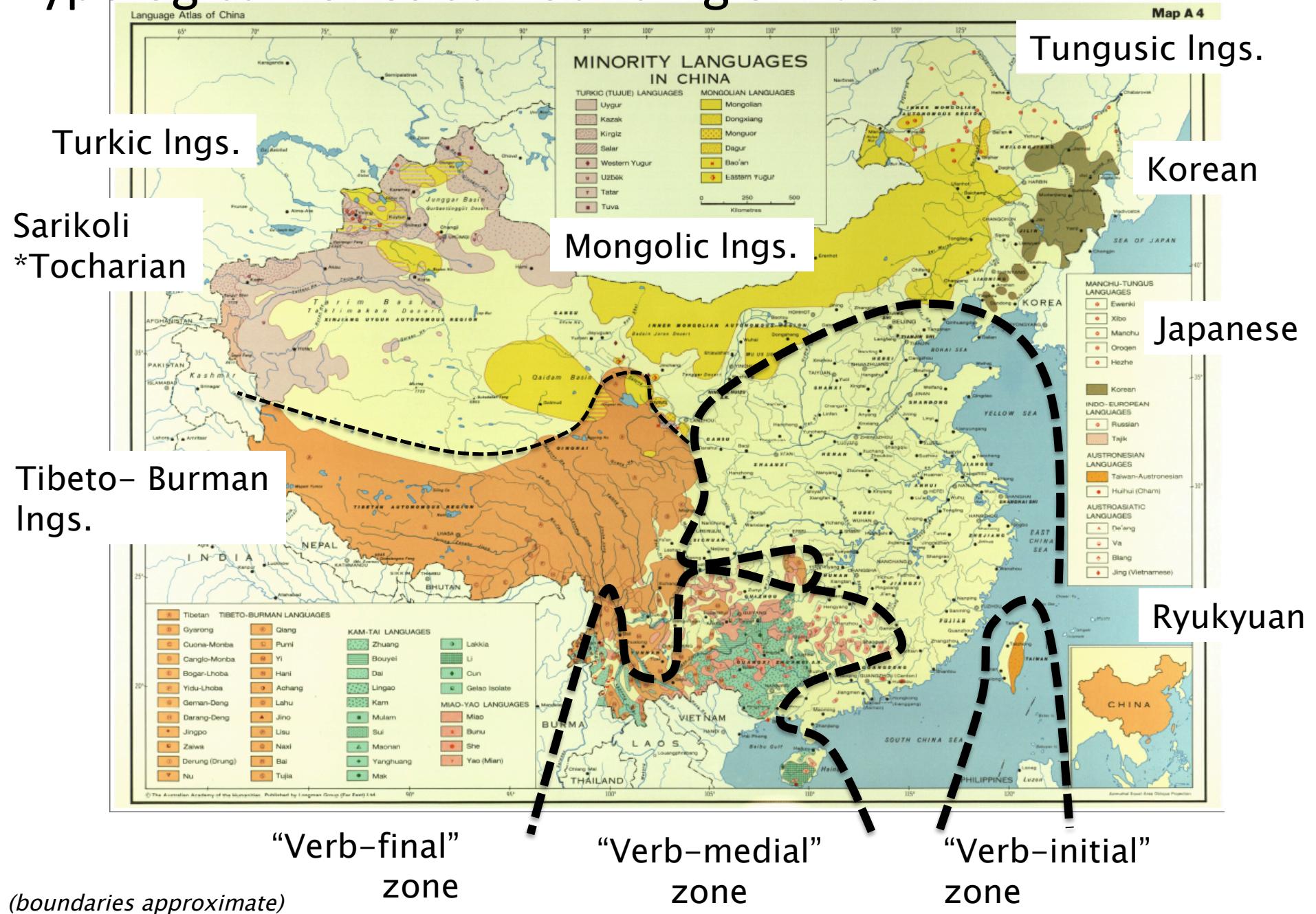
(Ten main groups in the
Language Atlas of China;
Würm et. al 1988)

Würm, S.A. et al (eds.). 1988. *Language Atlas of China*. Hong Kong, Longman

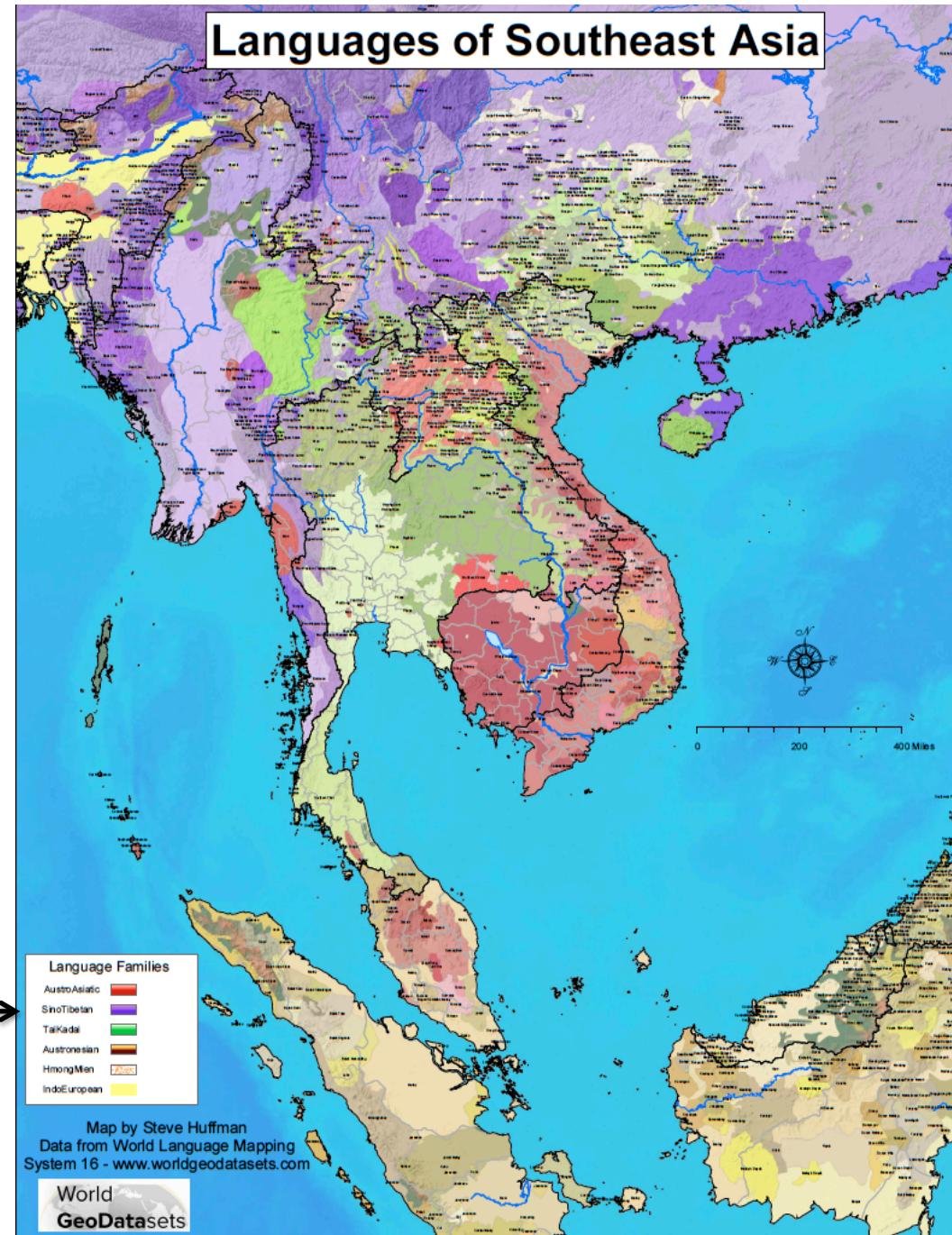
Map A 2



Typological zones surrounding Sinitic



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 لەغىمەن يەيمەن

mæn læymæn yæ-y-mæn
1SG läghmän eat-NPST-1SG
'I eat läghmän'



Mainland SE Asian SVO

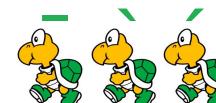
Hmong-Mien, Kra-Dai, Mon-Khmer,
Bai, Karen...

Generally:

- SVO;
- sesquisyllabic or monosyllabic; analytic;
- phonation contrasts and/or more complex syllable tone systems.
- stronger left-headedness;
- case markers rare;
- "aspect prominent";
- more classifiers.

e.g. Thai

ຜມກິນຂ້າວ
p^hõm kīn k^háaw
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

wals.info/feature/96A

SVO and Oblq V

wals.info/feature/84A

(Regionally rare:) VO and Adj N

wals.info/feature/97A

e.g. Cantonese:

我 頭先 嘸 條 河 道 見倒 [你 唔見 佐] 嘴 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).

LaPolla, Randy. 1994. “On the change to verb-medial order in Proto-Chinese: Evidence from Tibeto-Burman”. In Kitamura, Hajime, Tatsuo Nishida, and Yasuhiko Nagano (eds.). *Current Issues in Sino-Tibetan Linguistics*. Osaka: Organizing Committee of the 26th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Linguistics: 98-104.

Li, Charles and Sandra Thompson. 1974. “An explanation of word order change SVO → SOV”. *Foundations of Language* 12: 201-214.

Matisoff, James A. 1994. “On departing from verb-final word order”. In Kitamura, Hajime, Tatsuo Nishida, and Yasuhiko Nagano (eds.). *Current Issues in Sino-Tibetan Linguistics*. Osaka: Organizing Committee of the 26th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Linguistics: 81-97.

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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.

Benedict, Paul K. 1994. “On VO vs. OV in Southeast Asia”. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 8(1):59-77.

Djamouri, Redouane, Waltraud Paul, and John Whitman. 2007. “Reconstructing VO constituent order for proto-Sino-Tibetan”. Talk given at the 18th International Conference on Historical Linguistics, Université du Québec à Montréal.

Syllable structure and tones

Old Chinese (e.g. Baxter & Sagart “2011”):

(C(ə)-)C^(r)(r)V(C)(?)(-s)

e.g. 二 *nijs ‘two’, c.f. Written Tibetan གུནྵସ gnyis ‘two’

Middle Chinese (e.g. Baxter 1992)

C(j)(w)V(C)^{TONE}

3+1 tones:

*LEVEL, *RISING, *DEPARTING, *ENTERING

Baxter, William and Laurent Sagart. n.d. Baxter-Sagart Old Chinese reconstruction (Version 1.00). <http://crlao.ehess.fr/document.php?id=1217>; 19 Feb 2012.

Baxter, William. 1992. *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*. Berlin: Mouton de Guyter.

e.g. Standard Cantonese tones

	*level 平	*rising 上	*departing 去	*entering 入	
*VOICELESS	˥	˧	˨	˥s	˨˩
*VOICED	˨	˧	˨	˨	

e.g. Standard Mandarin tones

	*level 平	*rising 上	*departing 去	(*entering 入)
*VOICELESS	˥	˨˧		(random)
*VOICED sonorant			˥	˥
*VOICED obstruent	˧			˧

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

	*A	*B	*C	*D
*aspirated	/	˨	˧	˥
*unaspirated/ *GLOTAL	˧			˧
*VOICED		˨	˧	˧s

e.g. Northern Vietnamese tones

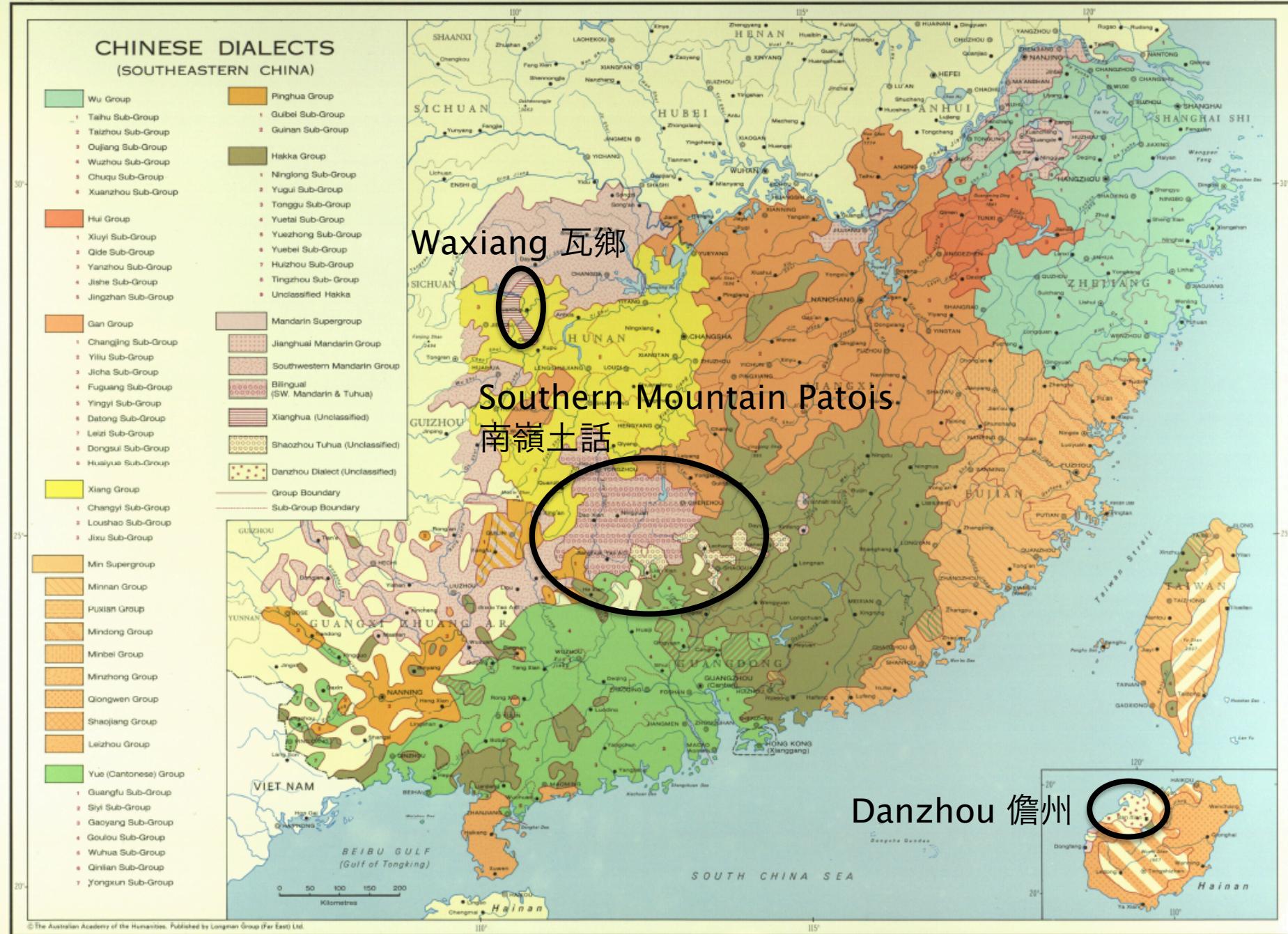
*VOICELESS	˧	˧	˧	˧
*VOICED sonorant	˧			
*VOICED obstruent	˨	˨	˧?˧	˨

Sinitic languages



THE 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.

Hashimoto, Mantarō. 1976. "Language diffusion on the Asian continent: problems of typological diversity in Sino-Tibetan". *Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages* 3: 49-63.
Hashimoto, Mantarō. 1986. "The Altaicization of Northern Chinese". McCoy J. and T. Light (eds.). *Contributions to Sino- Tibetan Studies*. Leiden: Brill. 76-97.

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

紅古 Hónggǔ , Gānsū 2+0 tones; Old Nánjīng Mandarin 4+1 tones

Wú:

Sūzhōu 6+2 tones; Shànghǎi 3+2 tones; 吳江 Wú jiāng 9+3 tones

Yuè: Standard Cantonese 6+3 tones; Zhōngshān 4+2 tones

Southern Pinghua, e.g. Nánníng 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 -?

Xiāng: genenrally -n and ~

Eastern Mín: -ŋ and -? (-k/-?)

Standard Cantonese, Hakka: -m -n -ŋ -p -t -k

Nanchang Gàn: -n -ŋ -t -k

Standard Southern Mín: -m -n -ŋ ~ -p -t -k -?

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 rènshí 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 expanding use of the general classifier 個/gè.
(most extreme: rø 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

dào Běijīng qù

to Beijing go

c.f.

Shanghainese tʂʰi poʔtɕin

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 Línxìà), 唐汪 Tángwàng

(Xining Mandarin

Dede 2007:867)

- (5) a. 肉 哈 狗娃 吃上了
meat [xa] dog eat pft
'The meat was eaten by the dog.'⁴
- b. 狗 肉 哈 吃 了
dog meat [xa] eat pft
'The dog ate the meat.'
- c. 狗 把 肉 哈 吃 了
dog [pa] meat [xa] eat pft
'The dog ate the meat.'

Dede, Keith. 2007. "The origin of the anti-ergative [xa] in Huangshui Chinese". *Language and Linguistics* 8(4): 863-881.

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 *zoeng*¹
but rarely used in Yue, Pinghua and Hakka in Guangdong

Standard Cantonese

我食咗啲個蘋果

ngo⁵ sik⁶ zo² go² go³ ping⁴gwo²

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 géi n ǐ yī běn shū
give 2SG one CL book

South: give DO IO

e.g. Shanghai soŋ pən 'sz noŋ
Cantonese bei² pun² syu¹ nei⁵
give CL book 2SG

c.f. Thai hái náŋsăw k^hun ໄກ້ໜັງລືອຄຸມ
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˥˧ tʂí˥˧

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 bei² pun² syu¹ keoi⁵ (give DO IO)
give CL book 3SG

fat⁶ keoi⁵ jat¹ baak³ man¹ (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: 紿 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)

張敏. 2011. “漢語方言雙及物結構南北差異的成因：類型學研究引發的新問題.” *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics* 4(2): 87-270.

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)