

ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE CLAUSE IN
PROTO-SINO-TIBETAN AND ITS DEVELOPMENT
IN THE DAUGHTER LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

In Sino-Tibetan historical linguistics, much has been done in reconstructing the sound system of Proto-Sino-Tibetan and in reconstructing a large number of cognate lexical items assumed to have been part of Proto-Sino-Tibetan, and there has been considerable work in terms of what morphology can or cannot be reconstructed to Proto-Sino-Tibetan, but it is much harder to say that two syntactic patterns are cognate than to say that two morphological paradigms or particular words are cognate. Within the family we find that modern Sinitic varieties vary from most of the Tibeto-Burman languages in terms of basic clause structure. In this paper we look at information structure in Old Chinese to attempt to find a directionality to the changes found in the long period we think of as Old Chinese, and to look back to the starting point of those changes to see what the clause structure of the precursor of Old Chinese might have been. As it turns out to be more similar to the dominant patterns of Tibeto-Burman languages, it allows us to hypothesize what the patterns were in Proto-Sino-Tibetan.

KEYWORDS

Sino-Tibetan languages Historical linguistics Information structure
Syntactic reconstruction