

ON THE GENETIC RELATIONSHIP OF SINO-TIBETAN  
LANGUAGES—BASED ON RANK ANALYSIS OF CLUSTERS  
OF CULTURAL WORDS AND CORE WORDS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we discuss the genetic relationship of Sino-Tibetan languages, especially that between Sino-Tibetan and Kam-Tai languages. We first review the methodology of correlated and complete sound correspondence and that of rank analysis. By adopting the latter methodology, we then demonstrate rank analyses of domestic animals, tool materials, numerals, and core words, all of which serve as case studies on the relationships between Old Chinese and such languages as Kam-Tai, Written Tibetan, and Written Burmese. Based on the distributional differences of sound correspondences across ranked lexical items in the aforementioned semantic domains, we propose a genetic tree of Sino-Tibetan languages whereby Kam-Tai is not related to Sino-Tibetan.

KEYWORDS

Sino-Tibetan Kam-Tai Strict sound correspondence Rank analysis  
Genetic relationship

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