【Article】

Using Minority Languages to Inform the Historical Analysis of Major Written Languages

A Tuu Perspective on the 'Give' ~ Object Marker Polysemy in Sinitic*

GÜLDEMANN, Tom

One hallmark of Chinese languages is serial verb constructions. Among other things, these structures are responsible for the development of a type of word order flexibility whereby the object varies in position by occurring after or before the verb—a phenomenon which is also found in languages with a different areal and genealogical affiliation, notably from Africa (cf. Lord 1982, 1993). The preverbal object position, associated in Sinitic with the so-called "disposal construction", is normally accompanied by a marker preceding the object, which emerges historically by way of grammaticalization of a former verb lexeme. According to cross-linguistic comparisons Sinitic seems to be exceptional, though, in that some of the apparent sources of these object markers are functionally hard to motivate and so far unattested in other languages (Chappell 2006). The analysis of typologically similar languages from the small, virtually extinct Tuu language family in southern Africa offers a solution to one such problematic case, namely that of 'give' ~ object marker polysemy. That is, there exists a plausible historical scenario according to which the lexical meaning 'give' and the object marking function, attested synchronically for a given element, are both secondary context-sensitive developments from an earlier obtainment-possession verb. This makes the problematic assumption of a direct change from 'give' to an object marker unnecessary. This shows that the documentation and analysis of endangered minority languages not only provides new insights into general linguistic phenomena, here the conditioned re-lexicalization of an obtainment-possession verb to a generic transfer verb, but can also inform the historical analysis of major written languages with a long and extensive philological tradition.

1. The problem of object marking in Sinitic

1.1 Obtainment-possession verbs in verb serialization

It has been shown in different geographical and genealogical language groups that serial verb constructions play an important role in the historical dynamics of the relevant languages: they are not only the source for the emergence of a large array of grammaticalized adpositional elements but are responsible for considerable syntactic restructuring more generally (cf., e.g., Lord 1982, 1993). One salient phenomenon is that languages with the original clause order S V O (OTHER), possibly involving double-object constructions, acquire an alternative order with a preverbal object S x O V (OTHER). Of particular importance are constructions of so-called "core" serialization (in the sense of Foley and Van Valin 1984) in which entire verb phrases are serialized and the first verb originally conveys that a controlling referent ~~already~~ has or achieves possession of an entity. Such verbs frequently develop in this context over time to grammatical markers immediately preceding the object, as schematized in (1).

(1) a. SUBJECT [VERB$_1$ THEME] [VERB$_2$ (OTHER)] >
     b. SUBJECT [GRAM THEME] [VERB (OTHER)]

Although the emerging grams are not always described transparently in relevant languages, it is clear that they have versatile uses; they range from encoding the grammatical relation and/or the discourse status of the following nominal participant to marking certain clause operator categories such as tense-aspect and the like. Representative examples are provided below from Benue-Congo and Kwa languages (Niger-Congo) spoken in central-western Africa, in which the relevant elements between subject and object can all be derived historically from an earlier 'take'-like verb (Lord 1982, 1993). They show the constructional alternation and the variation in the form and function of the relevant gram in the O V pattern: *la-* in (2)b. is an object marker prefixed to the noun whereby the source does not mention any semantic or pragmatic difference between the two structures; *á* in (3)b. is a particle normally described as an auxiliary marking tense-aspect; and *-de* in (4)b. is a suffix on the subject contributing crucially to the topical interpretation of the FOLLOWING object.
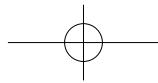
Table 1: Different semantic types of obtainment-possession verbs

Abstract meaning	Exemplary verb in English
Active (manual) appropriation	'take', 'grasp', 'catch'
Active (manual) manipulation	'hold' (stative counterpart of previous)
Neutral, less active acquisition	'receive', 'obtain', 'get'
(Neutral) possession	'have' (stative counterpart of previous)
Semantically generic accompaniment	'be with'

(2) Idoma (Idomoid, Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo)

a. *ó   mɔ̀cí*   [< *ma-ɔci*]
    3S   see:tree

b. *ó   **lɔ̀cí**   má*   [< *la-ɔci*]
    3S   OBJ:tree   see
    'She saw the tree' (Abraham 1951: 18)

(3) Nupe (Nupoid, Benue-Congo, Niger-Congo)

a. *Musa   zṹ   tsʊ̀kũ̀*
    PN   break   stick
    'Musa broke the stick'

b. *Musa   **á**   **tsùkũ̀**   zṹ*
    PN   PERF   stick   break
    'Musa got the stick broken/ has broken the stick' (George 1971: 90, 93)

(4) Akan (Potou-Tano, Kwa, Niger-Congo)

a. **ɔ-maa   me sिká   nó*
    3S-give   1S   money   DEF

b. *ɔ-**de**   **siká**   **nó**   maa   me*
    3S-AUX   money   DEF   give   1S
    'He gave me the money' (Stewart 1963: 147)[1]

The verbs which are relevant in such grammaticalization processes and which I will henceforth call more generally "obtainment-possession verbs" display a considerable semantic variation. This diversity is shown in Table 1.

1.2 Disposal constructions in medieval Chinese and modern Sinitic

The historical development sketched in §1.1 is also well attested and has been amply documented in the history of Sinitic languages (cf., e.g., Peyraube i.a. 1985, 1996; Bisang 1992; Chappell 2000, 2006, in press). Before the full diversification into modern Sinitic languages, the older stages of Chinese already displayed an opposition between an unmarked S V O (OTHER) clause, including double-object constructions with two unmarked post-

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1)   Cf. also Reineke (1991) on the grammaticalization of both *de* 'take' and *maa* 'give'.
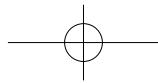
verbal objects, and a so-called "disposal construction" (=chǔzhìshì). In the second pattern one object is licensed in a core serial verb construction by an initial obtainment-possession verb. While in the earlier stages the predominant verb was *jiāng* 'guide, lead' (derived from 'take, bring'), this was supplemented and then increasingly ousted by the newer form *bǎ* 'grasp, hold'. The three major construction patterns are schematized in (5) and illustrated in (6)–(8), respectively.

(5) a. SUBJECT [*jiāng~bǎ* THEME] [VERB$_n$ OTHER]
    b. SUBJECT [*jiāng~bǎ* THEME] [VERB$_n$ PRO$_{THEME}$]
    c. SUBJECT [*jiāng~bǎ* THEME] [VERB$_n$ Ø]

(6) *qīng* **jiāng yùbǎn** *qiáo huāpiàn*
    lightly take jade.piece hit flower.petal
    '(She) lightly hits the flower petals with a piece of jade.'

(7) *chuán-zhě* *nǎi* **jiāng cǐ** **chán** *yǐ* *yóu āo zhī*
    boat-AGT then take this toad$_x$ with oil fry 3S$_x$
    'Then the boatman took the toad and fried it.'

(8) *shéi* **jiāng cǐ** **yì** *chén*
    who take this idea expose
    'Who could express this idea?' (Chappell 2006: 451)

The synchronic picture in modern Sinitic varieties differs in several respects from that in medieval Chinese (Chappell 2006, in press). First, the object licensed by the relevant verb must meet several criteria, namely, that it must be referential, often representing given information, and be highly affected and undergo a caused change of state that is expressed in the following verb phrase.

Second, the synchronic construction types involving such object markers are morpho-syntactically far more diverse. The five major patterns observed are given in (9); the object marker is bold-faced.

(9) a.   SUBJECT [**OBJ** THEME]   [VERB$_N$ OTHER]
    b.   SUBJECT [**OBJ** THEME]   [VERB$_N$ PRO$_{THEME}$]
    c.   SUBJECT [**OBJ** THEME] - [**OBJ** PRO$_{THEME}$] - [VERB$_N$ OTHER]
    d. THEME SUBJECT   [**OBJ** PRO$_{THEME}$] - VERB$_N$
    e. THEME   **OBJ** -   VERB$_N$

Finally, and importantly for the following discussion, the sources of the object markers appear to be more variable, comprising both lexical and grammatical elements. Moreover, the different sources are distributed according to wider areal patterns, summarized in Table 2.
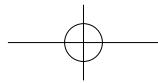
Table 2: Apparent etymological relations of object markers in modern Sinitic and their geographical distribution (after Chappell 2006)

	Area	Major Sinitic varieties	Object marker cognates
(A)	North	Mandarin, Jin, northern Wu	Verb of taking and holding
(B)	Central	Xiang, Gan, Hui, southern Wu, many central and southern Mandarin dialects	Verb of giving and helping
(C)	Southeast	Min, some Hakka and Wu dialects	Comitative marker
(D)	South	Yue, Hakka	Verb of taking or unmarked O V

The familiar situation that a relevant object marker is related to an obtainment-possession verb is found in the two areas (A) and (D) in Table 2. The languages feature cognates and synonyms of *bǎ* 把 'take' (in Standard Mandarin), *jiāng* 將 'take, lead', *ná* 拿 'take, hold' (cf. no^{53} in Shanghainese), and *laq⁷* 搦 'hold' (in Gan dialects). The historically older cases of the first and second etyma are exemplified in (10) for Standard Mandarin and in (11) for Hong Kong Cantonese, respectively.

(10) Standard Mandarin

    tiān hēi-le,   wǒ jiù   néng   **bǎ**   **màozi** *zhāi-le,*

    sky   dark-PFV 1S then be.able OBJ cap   doff-PFV

       bǎ   **biànzi** *fàng-zai dǒu-li*

       OBJ plait   place-at pocket-in

    'When night falls, I can take off (my) cap and put (my) plait in my pocket.'

    (Chappell in press)

(11) Hong Kong Cantonese

    jēung **néih** *dábaahn-sihng*   *yāt-go*   *baakyēpó*

    OBJ   2S   dress.up-become one-CL old.lady

    'dress you up like an old lady' (Chappell 2006: 461)

A more unusual group of apparent verbal sources for object markers are found in the central Sinitic area (B). These sources include cognates and synonyms of *gěi* 給 'give' (in many Mandarin dialects), *bǎ* 把 'give' (in Xiang and Gan), *ná* 拿 'give' (in Jiangxi Hakka dialects), *bāng* 幫 'help' (in Hui), and *dei¹¹* 代 (in Wu dialects). The following example from Xiang shows pa^{41}, a cognate of *bǎ* 把 'give', as a main verb in (12)a. and as an object marker in (12)b.

(12) Changsha Xiang

a. *ma³³ma ei*   **pa⁴¹** **ŋo** *lian⁴¹-kʰuai⁴¹* *tɕiẽ¹³*   *lo*

    mother PART   give 1S two-CL   money PART

    'Mum, give me two dollars please.'

b. **pa⁴¹**   **tɕhyan⁴¹ fu** *ta⁴¹-kʰai³³*

    OBJ   window   strike-open

    'Open the window!' (Chappell 2006: 466)
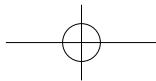
Finally, zone (C) in the southeast displays a relation between the object marker and another GRAMMATICAL element, namely the comitative preposition. Here one finds cognates and synonyms of *kā* 共 (in Min), *t'ung¹¹* 同 and *lau¹¹* (in Hakka dialects), *kən⁴²* 跟 (in certain Mandarin dialects), and *kai⁵⁵* 跟 (in Waxiang, Hunan). The example below displays a Hakka dialect with a cognate of *lau¹¹* as a comitative marker in (13)a. and as an object marker in (13)b.

(13) Meixian Hakka
a. *nó mì* *tsioù* **laō** **p'oû t'aô** *tsioù* laō *m̂ĝ* *kâp*
   rice wine COM grape wine mix NEG together
   'Rice wine and grape wine don't mix well together.'
b. *ngaî* **lau** **vuk** *mai* *tò* *le*
   1S OBJ house buy COMPL RELV
   'I (successfully) bought the house.' (Chappell 2006: 458–9)

While it is common practice to associate a gram type etymologically with a synchronically attested verb or another gram (cf., e.g., Wu 2005, chapter 6), Chappell (2006) recognizes that the sources of the modern Sinitic object markers, or, more neutrally, their apparent etymological relations, as found in the areas (B) and (C), namely transfer verbs and comitative markers, are highly unusual from a cross-linguistic perspective. This can be discerned from surveys dealing with the grammaticalization of the relevant gram type such as Newman (1996) and Heine and Kuteva (2002).

In the sections that follow, it is argued that the seemingly quirky grammaticalization of an object marker from a transfer verb 'give' is in fact not the most plausible path of historical development. There is empirical evidence that the synchronic polysemy of this type of element can be explained with an alternative scenario based on data from languages of the Tuu family in southern Africa. While these are geographically and genealogically entirely unrelated to Sinitic languages, they are overall similar in important typological traits and can thus inform the problematic question of the 'give' ~ object marker polysemy in Sinitic. The argument is that both aspects of the modern semantic-functional profile of a relevant element can be assumed to be secondary because a 'give' meaning can emerge from the re-lexicalization of an earlier obtainment-possession verb within the grammatical context of a ditransitive construction.

2. The relevance of derived transfer verbs for Sinitic history

2.1 The relation between obtainment-possession and transfer verbs in Tuu

Tuu languages, spoken by former hunter-gatherer groups in southern Africa, are commonly subsumed under the spurious genealogical label "Khoisan", but according to our present state of knowledge these languages are better viewed as forming an isolated family (Güldemann 2005a, 2008a). Today the majority of Tuu languages are extinct. Detailed and
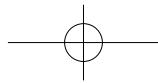
Taa-Lower Nossob
  (1) Taa   Lone Tree !Xoon, 'N|oha, N|amani†; N|u‖'en†, West !Xoon, ... (DC)
  (2) Lower Nossob† |'Auni, |Haasi (DC)
!Ui
  (3) N‖ng   ‡Khomani, N|huki, N|uu, ... (DC)
  (4) |Xam†   Strandberg, Achterveld, ... (DC)
  (5) ‡Ungkue†
  (6) ‖Xegwi†

Notes: DC=dialect cluster; †=extinct; (1)−(6)=corresponding number in map; **Bold**=more extensive data available

Figure 1: Preliminary internal classification of the Tuu family

1 Lone Tree !Xõo
2 I'Auni
   IHaasi
3 ‡Khomani
   N|huki
4 Strandberg IXam
5 ‡Ungkue
6 IIXegwi
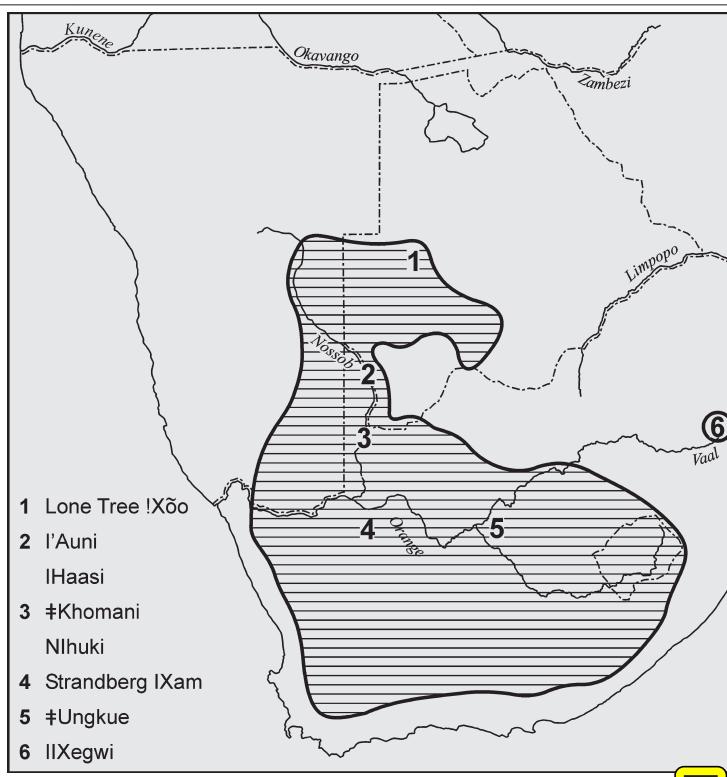
Map 1: The approximate historically attested distribution of the Tuu family

up-to-date information is only available for three larger dialect clusters, Taa, N‖ng, and |Xam. The approximate geographical distribution of Tuu is given in Map 1 and its preliminary internal classification is presented in Figure 1.

Like other southern African languages subsumed under the Non-Khoe typological grouping (cf. Güldemann and Vossen 2000), Tuu languages share a number of basic structural characteristics with other isolating verb-serializing languages in central-western Africa and in Southeast and East Asia, so that they can be meaningfully compared with Sinitic. There are, of course, also differences which will be pointed out in the following discussion to the extent necessary.

Synchronically Tuu languages predominantly display a basic clause with a fairly strict syntactic template, shown in (14).
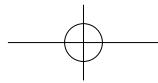
(14) SUBJECT [VERB$_1$ (VERB$_n$)] OBJECT ([PREPOSITION OTHER]$_n$)

Verb serialization is largely of the "nuclear" type (cf. Olson 1981, Foley and Van Valin 1984): all verb roots are serialized in an uninterrupted chain and are then followed by a structured sequence of all participants other than the subject. This is in contrast to modern Sinitic where such a pattern exists but is normally analyzed as a so-called "complement construction", distinct from verb serialization (cf., e.g., Hansell 1993).[2] Furthermore, all but the first postverbal participant are mostly marked in Tuu by a closed set of prepositions that number, depending on the language, between one and four. This fact, again opposed to Sinitic, excludes the possibility of double-object constructions. Finally, non-subject constituents can also not occur before the verb as in the marked disposal constructions exemplified for Sinitic (cf. §1.2) and other African languages (cf. §1.1).

A property in Tuu that is crucial for the present discussion is the historical relation between obtainment-possession verbs like 'take', 'get' etc. and generic transfer verbs conveying 'give', namely that the former take on the meaning of the latter within the grammatical context of certain ditransitive constructions. This will be shown first with data from the Taa language complex.[3] Within the Tuu family, Taa is the language with the largest set of prepositions, as listed in (15).[4]

(15) a. multipurpose oblique   *kM/tM*
    b. comitative   *|''aM* (West Taa), *ǀʜ*M (East Taa)
    c. dative   *n|aM*
    d. lexicalized   *saM*

Of special relevance for the following discussion is the dative marker *n|aM* which takes care of most transfer and other ditransitive relations. Compare in this respect the following two examples where *n|aM* marks the pronominal recipient of a semantically ditransitive verb 'show' in (16) and the pronominal beneficiary of a semantically monotransitive verb complex 'chop up' in (17).

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2)   In yet other languages such structures tend to be treated under "verb compounding" (cf., e.g., Lord 1975, Boyeldieu 2007)~~, this irrespective of whether they are lexicalized or not~~.

3)   The data presented here concern different dialects. The examples from East !Xoon (East Taa) are taken from Traill (1994, n.d.); those from West !Xoon (West Taa), which are given without a source, come from field work carried out initially by Roland Kießling, Christfried Naumann, and the author within a DOBES project funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. The distinct sources are responsible for minor orthographic differences.

4)   The language has a complex gender system with half a dozen agreement classes. These must be indexed morphologically on a number of agreement targets, among them all the prepositions. The class index refers to the prepositional object or its possessor, and is segmentally overt by a change of the final mora of the relevant element, symbolized by a capital M. Phonetically, the element can be a vowel or a nasal consonant.
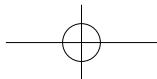
(16) *si   a   ǁxaan   mari*   **nǀae**
    1P.E   PST   show:2   goat.2   DAT:3PRO
    'we showed him the goat'

(17) *āh   sîi   sâa   ǁà̰be*   a   **ǀnāi   ǂnáĩ**
    2S   CONN   go   chop:3   cut.up:2PRO   DAT:1D   1D
    'and you go to chop [class 3 concord speech error] it [skin.2] up for us two' (Traill n.d.)

Taa's dative marker *nǀaM* is unique in the family and it appears to be derived through grammaticalization from an earlier verb *nǀaa* 'give', which is still found in the related language ǀXam, as shown in (18).

(18) ǀXam (!Ui, Tuu)
    nǀaa *ki*   ʘhoo   ǀee
    give   1S.OBL   branch   that
    'give me that piece of wood!' (after Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 338–9)

The process whereby the transfer verb 'give' serves to introduce an additional participant (usually in the V_2 position, cf. also (4)b. above from Akan) and subsequently grammaticalizes to a marker of indirect/dative objects in ditransitive constructions is widely attested cross-linguistically (cf. Newman 1996: 211–23), including Southeast Asia and Sinitic (cf., i.a., Matisoff 1991: 427–431, Bisang 1992, Peyraube 1996). The grammaticalization change, schematized in (19), occurs here in the V_2 position (this is distinct from the case of disposal constructions, outlined in §1, where the V_1-item becomes a gram and causes a conditioned word order change from V O to O V).

(19) a. SUBJECT [VERB$_1$ THEME] ['give'$_2$ RECIPIENT]   >
    b. SUBJECT [VERB   THEME] [GRAM RECIPIENT]

Considering the modern structure of ditransitives in Taa with *nǀaM*, this scenario implies an earlier more salient pattern of core verb serialization with *nǀaa 'give' as V_2. This is not too unlikely, because core serialization is still today marginally attested in Taa (cf. Kießling forthcoming).

Having given this language-specific background, attention can now turn to the point crucial for the present discussion; this concerns ditransitive constructions in Taa conveying manipulative transfer, i.e. 'give', and the major verb used in them. Traill's (1994) East !Xoon dictionary, based predominantly on the Lone Tree variety, provides only one clear candidate for a semantically generic transfer verb, given in (20). This is indeed the statistically most frequent, unmarked lexeme for rendering ordinary events of giving in all Taa dialects known so far.[5]
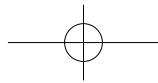
(20) /uM ~ !aM n/aM 'pass to, give' (Traill 1994: 55, 76, 232)

The verb itself cross-references the theme and occurs regularly in a construction with the following dative marker *n/aM* encoding the recipient. It has various other significant properties. First, it displays stem suppletion according to the number of the theme, hence the two different forms, */uM* for a singular object and *!aM* for a plural object, as illustrated in (21).

(21) a. *sí*   **|ūn**   ʘ**àa**   /*nān*
     CONN   give.S:1S   child   DAT:1S
     '... and give my child (back) to me?' (Traill n.d.)
   b. *ki*   **!aan**   *n/ai*   *tuu*
     CONN   give.P:2PRO   DAT:4>   people.4
     'and gives them (berries.2) to the people'

A less remarkable fact is that the class marker referring to the theme triggers vowel assimilation in the singular form, hence /uV^{high}, as in (21)a., vs. /oV^{mid}, as in (22). Finally and most importantly, although */uM ~ !aM* is the lexeme whose meaning comes closest to that of the generic transfer verb 'give' in English, it is in fact questionable whether this is its core meaning. If assuming 'give' is a core meaning at all, one must at least admit that the verb is polysemous, the particular interpretation depending on the construction context. That is, the 'give' meaning of */uM ~ !aM* only holds for ditransitive constructions involving the dative marker *n/aM*; the other salient and, as argued here, original use is that of a monotransitive verb which means specifically 'grab, grasp, (catch) hold (of)' but is often translatable with a general meaning of obtainment like 'take' or possession like 'have', as in (22).[6]

(22) *si*   **|oe**   **si nlau**   /''*ang*   ʘ*uru*
     1P.E   have.S:3>   problem.3   COM:1S   offspring.P
     'we get/have problems with my children'

In fact, a ditransitive transfer construction of the pattern */uM ~ !aM n/aM*, as exemplified in (21), could often still be paraphrased literally as 'take THEME to RECIPIENT'. However, this analysis is no longer possible across the board. For example, it is untenable for the phrasal idiom in (23) in both semantic and structural terms (e.g., /*ùa* lacks the expected class 3 agreement with *ǁ'úm*).

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5) There is another verb *!qhaM* translated as 'give' (Traill 1994: 87, 232). Given that its nominalization means 'generosity', it is more likely to have the more specific meaning 'share'.

6) Note that the !Ui sub-branch of Tuu possesses a verb /*ai*, often [li:], which means 'take'. It remains to be investigated whether this and Taa */uM* are cognate.
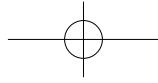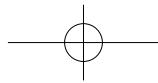
Table 3: Semantic affinities and differences between 'take' and 'give'

	Property	'take'	'give'
(i)	Clause structure is:	monotransitive	ditransitive
(ii)	1st participant=agent:	controls theme/state of affairs	
	> Control over entity is:	assumed	transferred
(iii)	2nd participant=theme:	undergoes movement	
	> Movement is directed:	towards agent	away from agent
(iv)	3rd participant=recipient:	absent	present
	> Movement is directed:	—	towards recipient

(23) ǀùa ʄúm /naM

take   forgiveness.3   to/for

'apologize to' (Traill 1994: 129)

Moreover, there are some contexts where /uM ~ !aM is used outside the dative 'give' construction but nevertheless seems to convey transfer rather than (or in addition to) obtainment-possession. In (24), for example, the object *tuu* 'people' is harder to conceive of in the complex predicate as the theme of /ui that is controlled and manipulated by the agent. Such cases might actually serve as bridging contexts for the incipient reanalysis of /uM ~ !aM towards transfer semantics when the dative marker is absent.

(24) *suu*   *si*   **ǀui**   **tuu**

feed.first.time   IPFV   ?"GIVE":4>   people.4

'... purifying the people [during a female initiation ceremony, lit.: feed to the people]'

Whatever the exact semantic interpretation of /uM ~ !aM—as monosemous with a constructionally triggered additional reading or as fully polysemous—the apparent historical relation in Taa implies that, in general, obtainment-possession verbs and transfer verbs display an intimate semantic relationship. This has indeed been demonstrated from a general perspective by previous research (cf., e.g., Newman 1996: 56–8, 115–8, 243–8 and Viberg 2010). Table 3 summarizes the most important commonalities and differences between the two verb types.

There are also a number of concrete cross-linguistic precedents for this close affinity between 'take' and 'give' verbs and their respective constructions, for example, in Indo-European (Wlaschim 1927, Kretschmer and Wahrmann 1931, Janda 1997); Sochipan Chinantec, Japanese, and Chamorro (Newman 1996: 115–6); and Chipewyan (Rice 1997). The situation in Taa provides further evidence of a kind which, to my knowledge, has not yet been recognized, namely that 'give' can emerge historically from 'take' through lexical enrichment with or absorption of the semantic component of transfer within a grammatical construction that inherently conveys this meaning.

This mechanism of change from an obtainment-possession verb to 'give' is evident in yet another case in the Tuu family. Recall from (15)d. above that Taa possesses a non-

productive preposition *saM*. This is with all probability etymologically related to a still existing obtainment-possession verb *saM* 'get, find', as shown in (25).
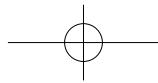
(25) East !Xoon (Taa, Tuu)
    sán   tháa
    get:5>   thing.5
    'find the thing' (Traill 1994: 186)

With the background of the previous discussion, one can make a plausible connection between this obtainment-possession verb and a likely cognate in N‖ng, another dialect cluster of Tuu. The central ditransitive construction of N‖ng showing indirective alignment is schematized in (26).

(26) SUBJECT   VERB$_n$ RECIPIENT-*a*   THEME

As can be expected, this ditransitive construction also conveys object transfer, whereby one central verb in this context has the form *saa*, as illustrated in (27).

(27) N‖ng (!Ui, Tuu)
    *hng   n‖ae   **saa** **ha**   n‖ng*
    3H.P   then give 3H.S:DAT blanket
    'then they give him a/the blanket' (T.G. field notes)

Although historical sound changes in the Tuu family have not yet been worked out conclusively, according to the current state of knowledge it is plausible that Taa *saM* 'get' and N‖ng *saa* 'give' form a regular correspondence set and represent two stages of the very change just discussed for Taa /uM ~ !aM, except that this case seems to be more advanced: the presumably original obtainment-possession meaning of *saa would in N‖ng have given way completely to a new transfer meaning within a specific constructional context. The semantic plausibility of this hypothesis can be easily discerned from a colloquial English expression like *'Get me a knife!'*. Taking the comparative Tuu data into account the construction in N‖ng could still be paraphrased as 'get RECIPIENT THEME', except that there is so far no evidence in the language itself that *saa* is or was associated with obtainment-possession semantics.

In summary, there is robust evidence in the Tuu family that a 'give' verb can be the result of **re-lexicalization** of an earlier obtainment-possession verb in a grammatical construction which inherently involves transfer. The semantic mechanism does not even imply a more complex chain of subtle transitional contexts. As the second case in Tuu of *saa 'get' ~ 'give' suggests, the change from an obtainment-possession to a transfer reading can be achieved by merely adding a constituent to a simple monotransitive construction which refers to a recipient who assumes control over the object of the obtainment-possession verb.
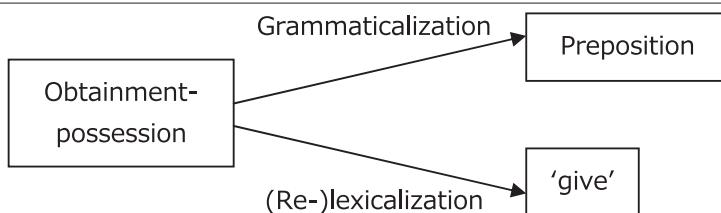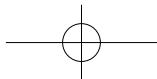
Figure 2: Possible semantic changes of obtainment-possession verbs

I have mentioned above that *saM* 'get' in Taa has also undergone **grammaticalization** towards a lexicalized preposition. Hence, the Tuu etymon *saa would provide evidence for a more complex historical scenario schematized in Figure 2: in one and the same family, an original obtainment-possession verb synchronically has two secondary semantic profiles, namely of a grammaticalized preposition, as in Taa, and of a re-lexicalized transfer verb, as in Nǁng.

2.2 The 'give' ~ object marker polysemy in Sinitic revisited

The relevance of the data from the Tuu family for the 'give' ~ object marker polysemy in Sinitic should be clear. As pointed out in §1.2, although the common generalization that historical change goes from lexical to grammatical meaning suggests, if anything, the development from 'give' to an object marker, this hypothesis is so far without typological precedents and thus quirky. The discussion of the situation in Tuu, however, provides an explanatory framework to solve this problem. That is, it is possible to propose an alternative historical scenario for the relevant Sinitic languages. Again, the empirical data are taken predominantly from Chappell (2000, 2006, in press).

In a first step, one and the same obtainment-possession verb underwent two different changes depending on its constructional context: in the well attested disposal construction (cf. §1.2), it grammaticalized to an object marker; as opposed to this, in a ditransitive construction conveying transfer, it became re-lexicalized to 'give', as described for Tuu (cf. §2.1). This would yield a semantic map like that in Figure 2 whose implied diachronic changes are functionally and typologically plausible.

In a second step, the innovative 'give' meaning expanded to contexts outside the ditransitive transfer construction. If, in a further development, this new semantic component of the verb ousts its parallel and original obtainment-possession meaning, a semantic map as in Figure 3 would emerge. This is historically "truncated", so to speak, so that the semantic-functional relation between the two remaining uses has become opaque—the situation found today in a number of modern Sinitic varieties.

This historical hypothesis implies several assumptions which can partially be tested with empirical data. One such assumption is that earlier Chinese chronolects should have possessed the structural preconditions for the constructionally triggered meaning change from 'take' to 'give'. Peyraube's (1996) survey of ditransitive constructions in Late Medieval Chinese provides the relevant evidence. He describes a surprising variety of syntactic patterns involving a second recipient role, as schematized in (28).
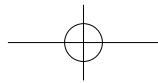
Figure 2 Semantic polysemy of earlier obtainment-possession verb after loss of original meaning

(28) a. SUBJECT VERB   RECIPIENT   THEME

     b. SUBJECT [VERB *yǔ*] RECIPIENT   THEME

     c. SUBJECT [*yǔ*   RECIPIENT] [VERB THEME]

     d. SUBJECT [VERB   THEME]   [*yǔ*   RECIPIENT]

While the structure in (28)a. is a double-object construction, all other patterns derive ultimately from serial verb constructions involving the original transfer verb *yǔ* 'give'. The pattern in (28)b. would represent an (earlier) serial verb construction of the nuclear or root type, giving evidence that this structure was more productive than in modern Sinitic, where it is merely reflected in the so-called "complement construction". The patterns in (28)c. and (28)d. have their origin in serial verb constructions of the core type, their difference being a reversed order of the theme and recipient phrase; here, the transfer verb *yǔ* developed to a more general dative marker, in line with the general cross-linguistic tendency mentioned in §2.1. The resulting more grammaticalized ditransitive construction then ousted the other alternatives; *yǔ* was later replaced by *gěi* 'give' as in modern Mandarin.

Considering the discussion of the Tuu data in §2.1, earlier Chinese indeed possessed the structural ingredients for a conditioned semantic reanalysis of an obtainment-possession verb to a generic transfer verb 'give': the construction in (28)d. as well as the plausible possibility of simply adding a dative-marked recipient to a monotransitive clause involving an obtainment-possession verb. According to H. Chappell (p.c.) the pattern in (28)d. is, however, only attested historically with a semantically specific verb of giving rather than an obtainment-possession verb in the V_1 position. This suggests that the process hypothesized here would have happened earlier or in other relevant speech varieties on which we lack documentation.

In any case, a modern survey of the relevant verbs within and across Sinitic languages yields more evidence in favor of the scenario proposed here. That is, some apparent verbal sources of object markers are even today lexically polysemous between a transfer and an obtainment-possession meaning (Chappell 2006, in press) and thus represent synchronic evidence for the semantic map in Figure 2. Within languages or dialect clusters, this holds for *na²* 拿 and *laq⁷* 搦 in Gan and for *tet* 得 in Dabu Hakka. Looking across languages or dialect clusters a 'give' meaning is attested for *ba³* 把 in Xiang and Gan, for *na²* 拿 in Gan and Jiangxi Hakka, and for *tet* 得 in Hakka, while they are used as obtainment-possession verbs in other Sinitic varieties, notably in Mandarin. The particular family-internal distribution of the two semantic patterns can be expected in the sense that the more conservative situation
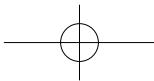
holds regularly for Mandarin which has a more direct link to the proto-language, while the apparent areal tendency for the innovative lexicalization towards 'give' exists in more southerly Sinitic languages; these developed only later in history due to the expansion of Chinese which presumably also involved considerable contact with non-Sinitic languages.

Historical and synchronic data can potentially yield additional support for this scenario because it implies (a) that the obtainment-possession meaning of a given verb should have historical precedence over its 'give' meaning and (b) that its particular semantic reading should interact systematically with the constructional context. For example, the 'give' meaning should be entrenched more deeply in contexts closer to transfer constructions with grammaticalized marking of the recipient.

When explaining the emergence of the 'give' ~ object marker polysemy by a parallel change undergone by an earlier obtainment-possession verb, otherwise hard to motivate from a synchronic perspective, it should be taken into account that this historical scenario need not apply to every modern case of this polysemy. This is because language contact is capable of blurring purely functional motivations. I refer to the observation that the meaning or function of an element in a second language can be influenced by the semantic profile of a partly related item in the first language of the respective contact situation. Thus, Bruyn (1996) discusses cases in creolization whereby the polyfunctionality of an element in the substrate was transferred or calqued onto an element of the lexifier language. In this case the polyfunctional element in the creole cannot be said to have undergone a gradual functionally motivated grammaticalization change. This phenomenon has also been observed by Güldemann (2005b, 2008b) for several marker types in the wider domain of quotative indexes, not restricted to creoles.[7]

In the present case of Sinitic languages it should thus also be investigated whether genuine 'give' verbs could have been subject to secondary functional "contamination" by relevant elements in non-standard varieties which already displayed the polyfunctionality; a candidate for such a scenario might be *gěi* 給 'give' in a number of Mandarin varieties (cf., e.g., Newman 1996: 248, Chirkova 2008).

3. Summary

The above discussion allows one to draw conclusions for several linguistic research areas. A first point relates to the semantics of basic action verbs. That is, the findings by Newman (1996) and others on the close affinity of and, at the same time, clear difference between 'take' and 'give' have been corroborated by data from additional but hitherto little known languages. The specific kind of evidence does not seem to have been attested before, namely that an obtainment-possession verb like 'take' can develop historically into 'give' through constructional enrichment by a novel transfer component away from the agent. This would be another variant of a phenomenon reported before by Comrie (2003: 8, citing

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7) Cf. also Heath (1997, 1998) for other cases of language change which are not (exclusively) motivated by semantic-functional factors.
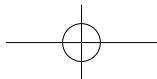
Gómez 1999) who reports that 'give' verbs in Huichol are derived causatives of 'take'. More generally this implies that 'give' is not necessarily a basic lexical item; this is in line with current semantic theories (e.g., the Natural Semantic Metalanguage by Wierzbicka and Goddard) according to which 'give' is not a semantic primitive. These observations pertaining to the lexicon echo recent structural findings about languages that lack a dedicated ditransitive construction (König and Heine 2010) or have developed it only fairly recently (Güldemann 2007).

A second area for which the above discussion is relevant is more general: it concerns the study of language change, notably of grammaticalization and lexical meaning change, and the possible role of grammatical constructions therein. A robust generalization of previous research has been that change goes from lexicon to grammar. Accordingly, if a synchronic polyfunctionality involves an item with a lexical meaning and a grammatical function, the default assumption is that the former should be the source of the latter. However, as the above case demonstrates, a lexeme that is subject to grammaticalization can in addition be subject to a shift in its lexical semantics. This would result in the synchronic coexistence of a grammaticalized function and a secondary lexical meaning, whereby the latter is not the source of the former—a perfect crime, so to-speak, for grammaticalization research that applies well-established principles too mechanically. Caution should thus be taken when trying to reconstruct historical developments from synchronic data alone. In the case of Sinitic languages, this might also be relevant for trying to explain yet other poorly explained polyfunctionality patterns of object markers mentioned in §1.2, such as lexical meanings like 'help' and 'mix' or grammatical functions like the comitative.

As indicated by Haspelmath (2003: 236–7), this is also relevant for the methodologically related semantic-map approach. Usually, the different attested uses or senses of a multi-functional or polysemous linguistic sign are assumed to represent CONTIGUOUS positions in a coherent semantic space and a generalized map tends to be derived from purely synchronic data. This is obviously jeopardized if, for whatever reason, a given element at some point in history abandoned a crucial position in the relevant network of inherently related meanings.

There is another interesting phenomenon observed in the above discussion which has barely been recognized in the previous study of meaning change: the development of lexical items, here verbs, to a new semantic profile can occur within constructions and is essentially steered by the meaning of these grammatical structures. According to the discussion by Güldemann (2008b: 386–95, 527–9) concerning certain verbs lexicalizing in and out of reported-discourse constructions, such processes are also attested elsewhere. Although they only contradict claims about an EXCLUSIVE directionality from lexicon to grammar, rather than contradicting the tendency in general, they may still have to be entertained, within well-defined limits, more often than expected at present (cf. also Güldemann 2012).

A third conclusion from the above discussion is that language typology, as well as language-specific analysis, can benefit greatly from a geographically wide-ranging cross-linguistic comparison. Recall that the empirical data presented above involve isolating
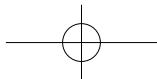
languages in three areas, namely central-western Africa, Mainland Southeast and East Asia (including the Sinitic family), and southern Africa (including the Tuu family). The languages involved share a number of morpho-syntactic similarities in their basic structure, as well as more detailed properties. This is in spite of the lack of any genealogical and geographical relationship between them, the dramatic differences in other linguistic domains, and the proven untenability of assuming simplistic "holistic" typologies. The usefulness of such a wider comparison is evidenced above by the fact that looking at languages in one area has fruitfully informed the analysis of those in another area. It can be expected that this will not be an exception. Rather, it hints towards the feasibility of a wider interdisciplinary research program on the basis of a fuller range of data drawn simultaneously from these three areas and possibly yet others displaying a similar typological profile. This would address the interesting question about the conditions under which this "language type" can arise in the first place and develop through time.

Last but not least, this paper reiterates the importance of the documentation and analysis of small minority languages, like those from the virtually extinct Tuu family. Not only is such research essential for the understanding of language as a general human capacity; as argued here, it can also inform the understanding of the linguistic history of major languages, like those from the large Sinitic family, which in spite of their long historical documentation can pose puzzling questions which otherwise might not be resolved conclusively.

Abbreviations and glosses

AGT agent, AUX auxiliary, CL classifier, COM comitative, COMPL completive, CONN clause connective, D dual, DAT dative, DEF definite, E exclusive, H human, IPFV imperfective, M mora, NEG negative, OBJ object marker, OBL oblique, P plural, PART particle, PERF perfect, PFV perfective, PN proper name, PRO anaphoric pronoun, PST past, RELV relevance, S singular
Arabic number followed by S/D/P=person category, otherwise=nominal agreement class

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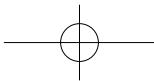
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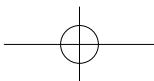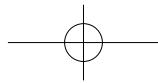
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