

## Participant marking in Sinitic viewed from a Tuu perspective

### 1 Serial verb constructions and object marking

+ several S-V-O languages display recurrent alternative word order S-x-O-V, going back to a “core” (= verb phrase) verb serialization (cf. Foley and Van Valin 1984):

(I) [SUBJECT - VERB - OBJECT - (OTHER)]

vs.

(II) [SUBJECT - [VERB<sub>1</sub> - THEME] - [VERB<sub>2</sub> - (OTHER)]]

V<sub>1</sub> = verbs of control, involving several types:

- ‘take, grasp, catch’ active (manual) appropriation
- ‘hold’ active (manual) manipulation - perfective counterpart of ‘take’
- ‘get, receive, obtain’ neutral/less active acquisition
- ‘have’ (neutral) possession - perfective counterpart of ‘get’
- ‘be with’ semantically generic accompaniment

> grammaticalizes to marker of (topical) direct objects, tense-aspect auxiliary, etc.

> (II) [SUBJECT - [GRAM - THEME] - [VERB - (OTHER)]]

> e.g. many Benue-Congo and Kwa languages in central-western Africa (Lord 1982, 1993) - gram can have different status as prefix, particle, and affix host:

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

a. *ó m̀̀xi* [*< ma-xi*]

3S see:tree

b. *ó l̀̀xi má* [*< la-xi*] [*l- < \*la ‘take’*]

3S ? :tree see

‘She saw the tree’

(Abraham 1951: 18)

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

a. *Musa zũ tsùkũ*

PN break stick

‘Musa broke the stick’

b. *Musa á tsùkũ zũ* [*á < \*la ‘take’*]

PN **PERF** stick break

‘Musa got the stick broken/ has broken the stick’ (George 1971: 90, 93)

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

a. \* *ɔ-maa me siká nó*

3S-give 1S money DEF

b. *ɔ-de siká nó maa me* [*-de < ‘take’*]

3S-AUX money DEF give 1S

‘He gave me the money’

(Stewart 1963: 147)

## 2 The “disposal construction” in Sinitic

### 2.1 Medieval Chinese

+ above phenomenon also attested in Sinitic (cf., Peyraube i.a. 1985, 1996; Bisang 1992; Chappell 2000, 2006, ms.)

> opposition between unmarked clause (I) and so-called “disposal construction” (= *chùzhìshì*) (II) older than full diversification into modern Sinitic languages:

(I) normal construction (also two postverbal objects > “double-object” construction)  
[SUBJECT - VERB - OBJECT - (OTHER)]

(II) core serial verb construction with several manipulation verbs; *jiāng* ‘guide, lead < bring, take’ and (younger) *bǎ* ‘grasp, hold’ oust alternative verbs

a. [SUBJECT - [*jiāng*~*bǎ* - THEME] - [VERB<sub>n</sub> - OTHER]]

b. [SUBJECT - [*jiāng*~*bǎ* - THEME] - [VERB<sub>n</sub> - PRO<sub>THEME</sub>]]

c. [SUBJECT - [*jiāng*~*bǎ* - THEME] - [VERB<sub>n</sub> - Ø]]

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

(5) *chuán-zhě nǎi jiāng cǐ chán yǐ yóu āo zhī*  
boat-AGT then take this toad<sub>x</sub> with oil fry 3S<sub>x</sub>  
‘Then the boatman took the toad and fried it.’

(6) *shéi jiāng cǐ yì chén*  
who take this idea expose  
‘Who could express this idea?’ (Chapell 2006: 451)

### 2.2 Modern Sinitic

+ synchronic picture differs in several respects (Chappell 2006, ms.):

- specific object status: must be referential (often given information) and be highly affected in undergoing a caused change of state (expressed in following verb phrase)

- five different construction types:

[SUBJECT - [OM - THEME] -	[VERB <sub>n</sub> - OTHER]]
[SUBJECT - [OM - THEME] -	[VERB <sub>n</sub> - PRO <sub>THEME</sub> ]]
[THEME - SUBJECT - [OM - PRO <sub>THEME</sub> ] -	VERB <sub>n</sub> ]
[THEME - OM -	VERB <sub>n</sub> ]
[SUBJECT - [OM - THEME] - [OM - PRO <sub>THEME</sub> ] -	[VERB <sub>n</sub> - OTHER]]

- etymological sources of object markers more diverse, with areal patterns:

Area	Source
(i) North: Mandarin, Jin, northern Wu	Verbs of taking and holding
(ii) Central: Xiang, Gan, Hui, southern Wu, many central and southern Mandarin dialects	Verbs of giving and helping
(iii) Southeast: Min, some Hakka and Wu dialects	Comitative markers
(iv) South: Yue, Hakka	Verbs of taking or unmarked O-V



**Map 1: The distribution of modern Sinitic languages**

(i)+(iv) Cognates and synonyms of *bǎ* 把 ‘take’ (Mandarin); *jiāng* 將 ‘take, lead’; *ná*<sup>2</sup> 拿 ‘take, hold’ (e.g., *nɔ*<sup>53</sup> in Shanghainese); *laq*<sup>7</sup> 擱 ‘hold’ (Gan dialects)

(7) Standard Mandarin

*tiān hēi-le, wǒ jiù néng bǎ màozi zhāi-le,*  
sky dark-PFV 1S then be.able **OM** cap doff-PFV

*bǎ biànzi fàng-zai dǒu-li*  
**OM** plait place-at pocket-in

‘When night falls, I can take off (my) cap and put (my) plait in my pocket.’  
(Chappell ms.: 2-3)

(8) Hongkong Cantonese

*jeung néih dábaahn-sihng yāt-go baakyēpó*  
**OM** 2S dress.up-become one-CL old.lady

‘dress you up like an old lady’

(Chappell 2006: 461)

(ii) Cognates and synonyms of *gěi* 給 ‘give’ (many Mandarin dialects); *bǎ* 把 ‘give’ (Xiang and Gan); *ná* 拿 ‘give’ (Jiangxi Hakka dialects); *bāng* 幫 ‘help’ (Hui); *dei*<sup>11</sup> 代 (Wu dialects)

(9) Changsha Xiang (*pa*<sup>41</sup> 把)

a. *má<sup>33</sup> ma ei pa<sup>41</sup> ŋo lian<sup>41</sup>-k<sup>h</sup>uai<sup>41</sup> tciē<sup>13</sup> lo*  
mother PART **give** 1S two-CL money PART

‘Mum, give me two dollars please.’

b. *pa<sup>41</sup> tɕ<sup>h</sup>yan<sup>41</sup> fu ta<sup>41</sup>-k<sup>h</sup>ai<sup>33</sup>*  
**OM** window strike-open

‘Open the window!’

(Chappell 2006: 466)

(iii) Cognates and synonyms of *kā* 共 (Min); *t’ung*<sup>11</sup> 同 and *lau*<sup>11</sup> (Hakka dialects); *kān*<sup>42</sup> 跟 (certain Mandarin dialects); *kai*<sup>55</sup> 跟 (Waxiang, Hunan)

(10) Meixian Hakka

a. *nó mì tsiòu laō p’ou t’aō tsiòu laō mġ kâp*  
rice wine **COM** grape wine **mix** NEG together

‘Rice wine and grape wine don’t mix well together.’

b. *ngai lau vuk mai tò le*  
1S **OM** house buy COMPL RELV

‘I (successfully) bought the house.’

(Chappell 2006: 458-9)

+ sources under (ii) and (iii) recognized as highly unusual for object marking (cf., e.g., Newman 1996, Heine and Kuteva 2002) > two solutions:

(a) leaving it at this > implies that Sinitic displays a linguistic quirk > But why would Sinitic be different?

(b) historical scenario is more complex > so far unexplained

- neither choice intrinsically better, empirical issue

> propose (b) for the ‘give’~object marker polysemy under (ii), based on data from languages of the Tuu family in southern Africa - geographically and genealogically unrelated but typologically partly similar

### 3 The history of ‘give’-verbs in Tuu

#### 3.1 Introduction

+ almost extinct isolate family, commonly subsumed under spurious “Khoisan”

Taa-Lower Nossob

*Taa* (DC)                      **West !Xoon**, N|u||’en†; N|amani†, ’N|ohan, **East !Xoon (1)**, Kakia†, ...

*Lower Nossob* (DC, 2)† |’Auni, |Haasi

!Ui

*N//ng* (DC, 3)                      N|**uu**, N|huki, †Khomani, ...

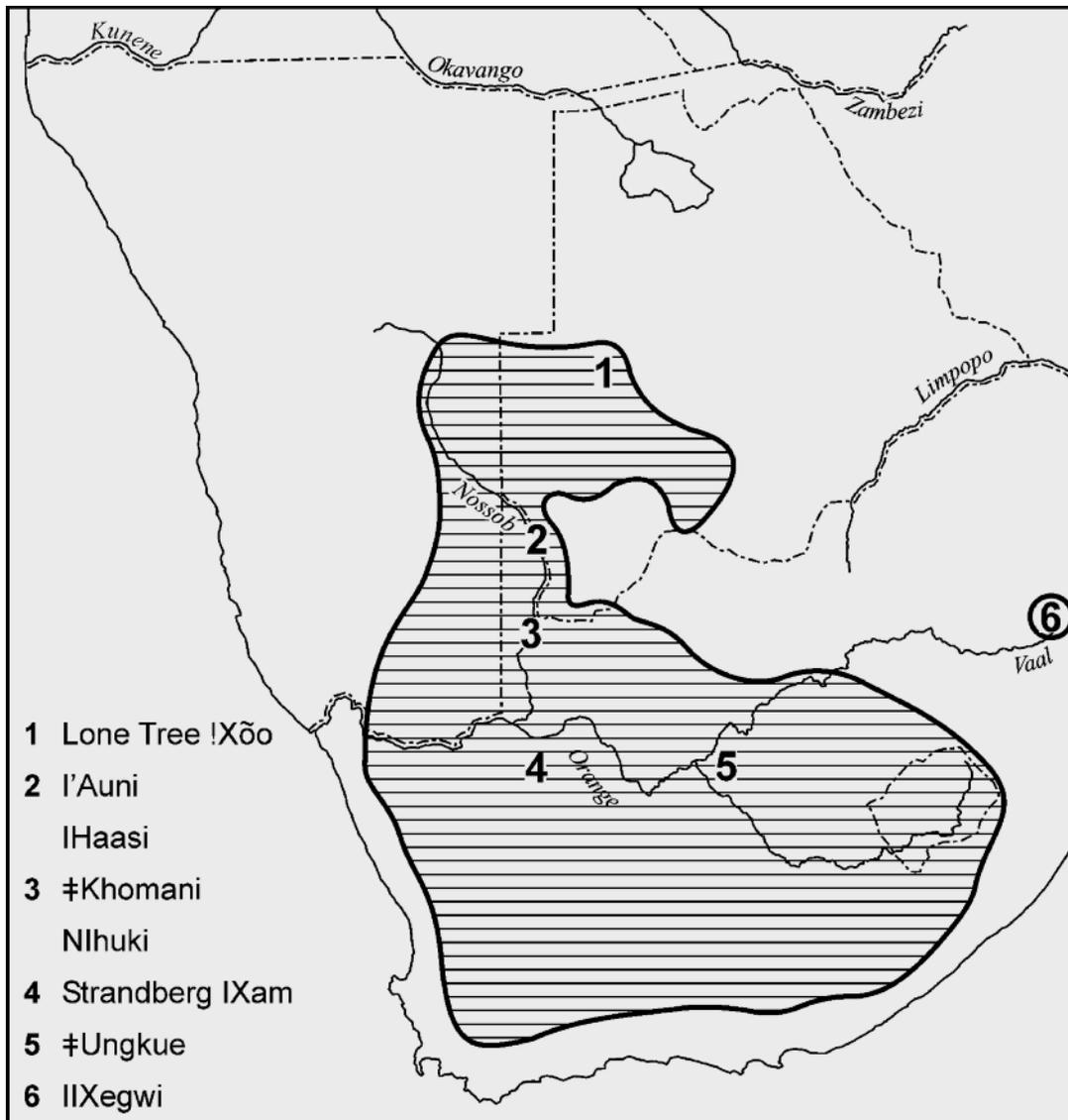
*/Xam* (DC)†                      **Strandberg (4)**, Achterveld, ...

‡*Ungkue* (5)†

*//Xegwi* (6)†

Notes: DC = dialect cluster; † = extinct; 1-6 = corresponding number in map; **bold** available data

**Figure 1: Preliminary internal classification of the Tuu family**



**Map 2: The earlier attested distribution of the Tuu family**

+ quite strict syntactic template of basic clause:

**(I) [SUBJECT - [VERB<sub>1</sub> - (VERB<sub>n</sub>)] - OBJECT - ([PREPOSITION - OTHER]<sub>n</sub>)]**

> “nuclear” (= verb root) verb serialization (cf. Olson 1981, Foley and Van Valin 1984)

> all but first postverbal participants marked by a very small set of prepositions

> neither double-object construction nor preverbal object construction

### 3.2 From ‘take’ to ‘give’ in Taa<sup>1</sup>

+ Taa language complex within Tuu with largest set of prepositions:<sup>2</sup>

a. multipurpose oblique *kM/tM*

b. comitative /*aM* (West Taa), /*#aM* (East Taa)

c. **dative *n/aM***, takes care of most transfer and other ditransitive relations

(11) *si a //xaan mari n/ae*  
 1P.E PST show:2 goat.2 DAT:3PRO  
 ‘we showed him the goat’

(12) *āh sīi sāa //ābe #ùma /nāĩ #nāĩ*  
 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.)

+ dative marker *n/aM* unique in the family, likely derived through grammaticalization from an earlier verb *n/a* ‘give’ as found in related language

(13) |Xam (!Ui, Tuu)  
*n/a ki Ohoo lee*  
**give** 1S.OBL branch that  
 ‘give me that piece of wood!’ (Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 338-9)

> implies for Taa an earlier pattern of core verb serialization with *n/aa* ‘give’ as V<sub>2</sub>:

**(II) [SUBJECT - [VERB<sub>1</sub> - THEME] - [VERB<sub>2</sub> - RECIPIENT]]**

V<sub>2</sub> = verb of transfer like ‘give’, increasing valency by controlling additional participant (cf. (3)b. above from Akan)

> grammaticalizes to indirect-object/dative marker in ditransitive construction; widely attested cross-linguistically (cf. Newman 1996: 211-23) and particularly in Southeast Asia and Sinitic (cf., i.a., Matisoff 1991: 427-431, Bisang 1992, Peyraube 1996):

> **(II)’ [SUBJECT - [VERB - THEME] - [GRAM - RECIPIENT]]**

<sup>1</sup> Examples from A. Traill are from East !Xoon (East Taa) and those given without source from West !Xoon (West Taa) investigated within an ongoing DOBES project. Hence, there are minor orthographic differences, for example, /*naM* vs. *n/aM*, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

+ modern ditransitive constructions with verbs of transfer more remarkable

> only two fairly generic ‘give’-verbs (Traill 1994: 55, 76, 87, 232):

- a. *!qhãM kM* ‘give’ - possibly more specific ‘share’ (cf. nominalization ‘generosity’)
- b. */uM ~ !ãM n/aM* ‘pass to, give’ - statistically very frequent > unmarked form

+ various significant lexical properties of first component */uM ~ !ãM* of item under b.:

- is transitive - agrees with first nominal of object phrase or incorporates object pronoun

> agreement triggers vowel assimilation in singular form: */uV<sup>back</sup>* vs. */oV<sup>front</sup>*

- displays stem suppletion according to number of object

- (14)a. *si /ũn Oãa /nãn*  
 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:1 people.1  
 ‘and gives them (berries.2) to the people’

- is synchronically polysemous, depending on construction context:

> ‘give’-reading only in ditransitive construction with dative *n/aM*; dominant and original<sup>3</sup> meaning in monotransitive construction: ‘grab, grasp, (catch) hold (of)’

- (15) *si loe si n/au /'ang Ouru*  
 1P.E **hold.S:3** problem.3 COM:1S offspring.P  
 ‘we get/have problems with my children’

> */uM ~ !ãM n/aM* phrase is lit. [[take THEME] [to RECIPIENT]], cf. frozen idiom

- (16) *!ùa //’úm /naM*  
 grasp forgiveness give (to)  
 ‘apologize to’ [*!ùa* lacks expected class.3-agreement with *//’úm*] (Traill 1994: 129)

> incipient reanalysis towards transfer semantics outside dative ‘give’-construction

- (17) *suu si /ui tuu*  
 feed.first.time IPFV **?GIVE~TO:1** people.1  
 ‘purifying the people [lit.: feed to the people]’

+ close semantic relation between ‘take’ and ‘give’ (Newman 1996: 56-8, 115-8, 243-8):

	<b>Property</b>	<b>‘take’</b>	<b>‘give’</b>
(i)	1st participant = agent > control over entity is	< control over state of affairs > assumed	transferred
(ii)	2nd participant = theme > movement is directed	< undergoes movement > towards agent	away from agent
(iii)	3rd participant = recipient > movement is directed	no -	yes towards recipient
(iv)	clause structure is	monotransitive	ditransitive

**Table 1: Semantic affinities and differences between ‘take’ and ‘give’**

<sup>3</sup> Cf. also the potential cognate */ai* in !Ui, which only means ‘take’.

+ typological precedents for intimate affinity between ‘take’- and ‘give’-verbs and their respective constructions: Indo-European (Wlaschim 1927, Kretschmer and Wahrmann 1931, Janda 1997); Sochipan Chinantec, Japanese, Chamorro (Newman 1996: 115-6); Chipewyan (Rice 1997)

> **semantic mechanism in change from ‘take’ to ‘give’: lexical enrichment with transfer-component within a transfer construction**

### 3.3 From ‘get’ to ‘give’ in N||ng?

+ *saa* ‘give’ used in a ditransitive construction with so-called “indirective” alignment (different from double-object construction):

[SUBJECT - VERB<sub>n</sub> - RECIPIENT-*a* - THEME]

(18) N|uu (N||ng, Tuu)

*hng n//ae saa ha n//ng*  
 3H.P then give 3H.S:DAT blanket

‘then they give him the blanket’ (T.G. field notes)

+ *saa* ‘give’ with likely cognate in Taa in a verb *saM* ‘get’<sup>4</sup>

(19) East !Xoon (Taa, Tuu)

*sán tháa*  
**get:5** thing.5

‘find the thing’ (Traill 1994: 186)

> transfer construction in N||ng with *saa* can be paraphrased as [get RECIPIENT THEME] as in colloquial English ‘Get me a knife!’

> **semantic mechanism parallel to that from ‘take’ to ‘give’**

**!!! A ‘give’-verb can be the result of re-lexicalization from a ‘take~get’-verb in a grammatical construction which inherently involves transfer.**

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<sup>4</sup> The verb has also grammaticalized in Taa into an oblique marker occurring in lexicalized collocations with certain verbs.

## 4 The ‘give’~object marker polysemy in Sinitic revisited

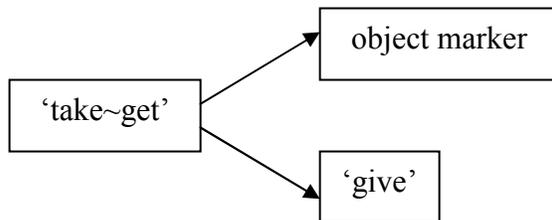
### 4.1 A different scenario

- + hypothesis of development from ‘give’ to direct-object marker typologically quirky
- > explanatory frame in Tuu can solve this problem by proposing the following scenario:

**STEP 1:** the same ‘take~get’-verb undergoes different changes depending on the context:

- a. grammaticalization to object marker in “disposal construction” (attested, cf. §2)
- b. re-lexification to ‘give’ via ditransitive transfer construction (as in Tuu, cf. §3)

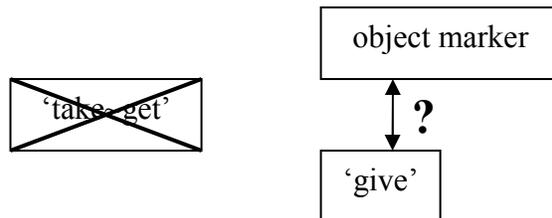
- > yields a semantic map whose implied diachronic changes are typologically plausible:



**Figure 2: Semantic polysemy of original ‘take~get’ after step 1**

**STEP 2:** transfer of innovative ‘give’-meaning to contexts other than dative construction, ousting its parallel and original ‘take~get’-meaning

- > yields a semantic map whose diachronic relation is opaque, as today in most Sinitic:



**Figure 3: Semantic polysemy of original ‘take~get’ after step 2**

### 4.2 Ditransitive constructions in Late Medieval Chinese

- + several patterns of ditransitive constructions involving a recipient role (Peyraube 1996)

(I) double-object construction

[SUBJECT - VERB - RECIPIENT - THEME]

(II) serial construction with *yǔ* ‘give’ in nuclear verb serialization

[SUBJECT - [VERB - *yǔ*] - RECIPIENT - THEME]

(III) serial construction with *yǔ* ‘give’ in core verb serialization; *yǔ* develops to dative marker, ousting alternatives (later replaced in modern Mandarin by *gěi* ‘give’)

a. [SUBJECT - [*yǔ* - RECIPIENT] - [VERB - THEME]]

b. [SUBJECT - [VERB - THEME] - [*yǔ* - RECIPIENT]]

- > construction (III), as possibly also (I), provides structural condition for reanalysis of a manipulation verb ‘take~hold~get’ to a transfer verb ‘give’, as observed in Tuu

### 4.3 Modern verb polysemy within and across Sinitic languages

+ some verbal sources of Sinitic object markers are lexically polysemous between ‘give’ and ‘take~hold~get’ (Chappell 2006, ms.)

a. within languages/dialect clusters: *na*<sup>2</sup> 拿 and *laq*<sup>7</sup> 搵 in Gan; *tet* 得 in Dabu Hakka  
 > identical with situation hypothesized in Figure 2

b. across languages/dialect clusters:

	‘take~hold~get’	‘give’
<i>bǎ</i> 把	i.a. Mandarin	Xiang, Gan
<i>na</i> <sup>2</sup> 拿	i.a. Mandarin	Gan, Jiangxi Hakka
<i>tet</i> 得	i.a. Mandarin	Hakka

> apparent areal pattern: strong tendency to ‘give’-lexicalization in southeastern Sinitic  
 - proposed scenario implies that:

a. ‘take~hold~get’-meanings have historical precedence over ‘give’-meanings

b. semantic reading/ meaning interact systematically with constructional context

### 4.4 Language contact as an additional factor?

+ however, not all items with ‘give’~object marker polyfunctionality necessarily derive historically from ‘take~hold~get’:

> substrate interference as another potential cause of polysemy: polyfunctionality of a relevant element in L1 is transferred/calqued onto an element in a prestigious L2 (attested cases in creolization and other language contact situations)

> possibility of secondary functional “contamination” of a genuine ‘give’-verb (cf. *gěi* 给 ‘give’ in northern Sinitic Mandarin, see also Newman 1996: 248)

## 5 Summary

+ above study implies several conclusions for:

### (I) Semantics of basic action verbs

- corroboration of Newman’s (1996) findings on the close affinity of and, at the same time, clear difference between ‘take’ and ‘give’

> above additional evidence so far unattested: ‘take’ can develop historically into ‘give’ by enrichment of transfer component

- ‘give’-verb not necessarily basic lexical item - echoes findings with ditransitive construction

### (II) Historical linguistics and grammaticalization

a. verb after grammaticalization can also undergo change in its original lexical semantics  
 > synchronic coexistence of grammaticalized function and secondary lexical meaning, which is not the source of the former

b. some such semantic changes of lexical verbs occur in grammatical constructions and are steered by the meaning of these constructions

> unrecognized so far, but attested elsewhere: ‘say’ from quotative marker in reported-discourse construction (Güldemann 2008)

> alternative approach also to Sinitic object markers which have yet other lexical meanings (‘help’, ‘mix’) or grammatical functions (comitative)

**(III) Language typology**

- isolating languages in at least three unrelated areas display a considerable amount of morpho-syntactic similarities in basic structure as well as more detailed properties:
  - a. Mainland Southeast and East Asia (including Sinitic)
  - b. Central-western Africa
  - c. Southern Africa (including Tuu) ??? other areas
- > represent a kind of robust language type despite of:
  - lack of genealogical and geographical relationship
  - dramatic differences in other linguistic domains
  - untenability of oversimplistic “holistic” typologies
- > study of languages in one area can fruitfully inform the analysis of those in another area
- > interdisciplinary research program: How does such a language type arise and develop?

**(IV) Documentation and analysis of small minority languages** (as from Tuu)

- is not only essential for the understanding of language as a general human capacity, but also informs the understanding of the history of major languages (as from Sinitic), which may pose puzzles in spite of their long historical documentation and the availability of information on older chronolects

**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, NEG negative, OBL oblique, OM object marker, 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

Arabic number without S/D/P: agreement class

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