

Selected Papers of Beijing Forum 2007

Language Contact and Language Change in the History of the Sinitic Languages

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Abstract

The Sino-Tibetan language family is one of the largest language families in the world, both in terms of number of speakers and in terms of geographic distribution. It includes the majority languages of China and Myanmar, plus minority languages in China, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Northeast India. Three main factors have been involved in the formation of the present-day Sino-Tibetan language family: a shared genetic origin, divergent population movements (i.e. innovations appearing in the different groups after their split), and language contact (among themselves and with non-Sino-Tibetan languages). Population movements and language contact have in fact generally been two aspects of a single phenomenon. This paper looks at the history of the development of the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family from the point of view of population movements and language contact, to show the role language contact has had in the formation of the branch as we know it today. These factors have been an important part of the development of the branch from its origin in the central plains of what is now north China, in the valley of the Yellow River, some 6,500 years ago, right up to the present, and are still the main factors in language change today.

Keywords: Sino-Tibetan, language change, language contact, migration, historical linguistics, Chinese

1. Introduction

It is generally agreed that the Sinitic languages (the Chinese ‘dialects’) and the Tibeto-Burman (TB) languages, the vast group of languages including Tibetan, Burmese, Tangut, Newar, and two or three hundred other languages, derive from a common source, forming what we know of as the Sino-Tibetan language family. This view is based on hundreds of clear cognates of basic vocabulary (Benedict 1972, Matisoff 1978, Baxter 1995; see LaPolla 1994a for a list of 200 of the most uncontroversial) as well as some derivational morphology that can be reconstructed to the mother of all the modern languages, what we call Proto-Sino-Tibetan.¹ The modern languages of this family are now spread through Northeast India, Nepal, Burma and western Thailand and all across what is now China. In the north the Sino-Tibetan speakers have been in long-term contact with the peoples of the Altai mountains and northern steppes, who speak the languages of what is known as the Altaic language family, including Uigur, Mongolian, and Manchu, and in the south the Sino-Tibetan speakers have had long-term contact with speakers of the Tai-Kadai (Zhuang-Dong), Austro-Asiatic, and Austronesian language families in southern China, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Within the two major branches of the Sino-Tibetan family we can identify some clear sub-groups, such as Lolo-Burmese and Bodish within Tibeto-Burman and Guanhua (Mandarin) within Sinitic, but there are still many

problems with trying to draw a family tree. Benedict (1972:6), for example, presents a view of the relationships among the Tibeto-Burman languages that is not a family tree, but ‘an interlocking network of fuzzy-edged clots of languages, emitting waves of mutual influence from their various nuclear ganglia’ (Matisoff 1978:2).ⁱⁱ Matisoff (1978) shows that the evidence from TB does not support a clear tree model. Rather there are waves of mutual influence, particularly in the spread of word families.ⁱⁱⁱ

On the Sinitic side, Pulleyblank (1991) has argued that the traditional *Stammbaum* (family tree) model is also inappropriate for the Chinese dialects. He argues instead for ‘some kind of network model, with provincial and regional centers of influence as well as successive national centers of influence in the form of standard languages based on imperial capitals’ (Pulleyblank 1991:442).

A major problem is the relationship of the Tai-Kadai and Hmong-Mien (Miao-Yao) languages to Chinese or Sino-Tibetan as a whole, that is, whether we consider the similarities among Chinese, Tai and Hmong-Mien to be due to contact or due to genetic inheritance. Many scholars in China argue that the languages are related, but most linguists outside China feel the shared words are very old loans, and the other features, such as the similarities in the tone systems and the use of the classifier for definite marking, spread areally. This makes it similar to the case of Vietnamese, which at one time was also thought to be related to Chinese, due to its many Chinese-like features and words, but is now understood to be a Mon-Khmer language heavily influenced by Chinese.^{iv} Three main factors have been involved in determining the characteristics and distribution of the present-day Sino-Tibetan languages: a shared genetic origin, divergent population movements (i.e. innovations appearing after these splits), and language contact. Population movements and language contact have in fact generally been two aspects of a single phenomenon. Due to space limitations, in this paper we will only look at the history of the development of the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family, from the point of view of population movements and language contact, to show the role language contact has had in the formation of the family as we know it today.

2. The migrations and their effects

From what we can piece together from the archeological and linguistic evidence (see for example Chang 1986, Treistman 1972, Pulleyblank 1983, Fairbank, Reischauer & Craig 1989, Xing 1996, Ran & Zhou 1983), it seems the Sino-Tibetan speaking people (if we associate the Neolithic Yang-shao culture with the Sino-Tibetans) originated in the central plains of what is now north China, in the valley of the Yellow River. At least 6,500 years ago, some members of the original group moved largely south and east, while others moved largely westerly at first, then moved in a southerly or south-westerly direction. Differences in identity and possibly language were evident at the time of the earliest Chinese writing, about 3500 years ago, but there continued to be contact between the two related groups and others that surrounded them in the early period (see e.g. Wang 1989), and frequent mixing of peoples (for example, the ancestors of some early Chinese rulers are said to have been from the western group—Ran & Zhou 1983, Ran et al. 1984, FitzGerald 1961). The group that stayed in the central plains, including those members of the western group that stayed in the central plains and nearby areas, as well as those who moved south-easterly, eventually became what we think of as the Chinese, while the group that moved far west and south-westerly became what we think of today as the Tibeto-Burmans.

The movements in both directions were not single movements, but consisted of larger or smaller waves of movement, often into the same areas. Government-encouraged migration was practiced as early as the Yin dynasty (roughly 1600-1027 BC), and has been practiced by all Chinese governments up to the present one. There have also been massive private migrations and shifts of national or regional capitals due to natural disasters, war, and the pull of new economic opportunities (Ge, Wu & Cao 1997).

The movement of what we think of now as the Chinese has almost never been to an area where there were no people. Splitting of the language by migration almost always involved language contact, either with non-Sinitic languages or other Sinitic varieties, and very often in government-sponsored migrations there was purposeful mixing of peoples. What we now think of as the Han Chinese have from very early on continually absorbed other peoples into the race (Wang 1992; Wiens 1967; Xu 1989). As the Chinese moved into new areas, they often absorbed the peoples there into the Han (Chinese) nationality, or, in some cases, were absorbed by the local nationalities (see for example Dai, Liu & Fu 1987 and He 1989, 1998 for a case of Mongolian soldiers and settlers sent to the southwest in the Yuan dynasty (1234—1368) being absorbed into the Yi culture and developing a new language).

Table 1, below, summarizes the major movements, giving the time period, the place moved from and the place moved to, the number of people who moved, if it is known from government records, and the original inhabitants of the area they moved to (data mainly from Lee 1978, 1982; Lee & Wong 1991; Zhou 1991; Ge, Wu & Cao 1997).

Table 1 Some Major Population Movements in China

Century	Moved from	Number	Moved to	Original inhab.
7th BC	Wei River valley (Shaanxi)	—	lower Yangtse	Bai Yue
6th BC	central plains (between Yellow and Yangtse rivers)	—	Han River and middle Yangtse (Hubei)	Bai Yue
3rd BC	Han/Middle Yangtse	—	Xiang River (Hunan)	Bai Yue
3-2nd BC	central plains	1.9 million	Hunan/Jiangxi/ Guangdong/ Guangxi/ northern Vietnam	Bai Yue
2nd BC	Henan/Hebei/ Shandong	155,000	Jiangsu/ Zhejiang	Wu Chinese/Bai Yue
2nd BC	Henan/Hebei/ Shandong	580,000	Gansu/Ningxia/ Mongolia	Tungistic/ Mongol
110 AD	Fujian (Min-Yue people)	—	Yangtse/Huai River	Chinese
1-2nd AD	Jiangsu/Zhejiang (orig. Wu speakers)	—	Fujian	Yue/Min-Yue
3-4th	Jiangsu/Zhejiang (later Wu speakers)	—	Fujian	early Wu speakers/ Min- Yue
2-3rd	northern steppes (Tungistic)	2 million	Central Plains	Chinese
2-4th	central plains	3 million	Jiangxi/ Zhejiang/ Jiangsu	Wu/Chu Chinese
3rd	Shanxi	—	Hebei	
3rd	Hebei	200,000	northeast China	Altaic

4th	Shaanxi (Di and Chinese)	several hundred thousand	Sichuan/Yunnan	
4th	Sichuan	tens of thousands	Hunan/Hubei	
8th	central plains	hundreds of thousands	Hunan/Hubei/Jiangsu/Jiangxi	
9th	central Jiangxi	—	Fujian/Guangdong/eastern Jiangxi	
11-13th	central plains	millions	all areas of south	
13th	Fujian/Guangdong/eastern Jiangxi	—	northeastern Guangdong	
13th	all over China	50,000 soldiers & families	Yunnan	Tai/TB
14-17th	all over China	1 million	Yunnan/Sichuan	Tai/TB
17-18th	Fujian (Min & Hakka)	—	Taiwan	Austronesians
17-18th	northeastern Guangdong	—	Sichuan/Guangxi	Tai/TB/Chinese
17th	Hunan/Hubei	—	Sichuan	
18-19th	Sichuan/Jiangxi/Hunan	2.5 million	Yunnan/Guizhou	
18-20th	Hebei/Shandong	tens of millions	Northeast China	Altaic
20th	all areas of China	millions	Inner Mongolia	Altaic
20th	lower Yangtse/Shandong	1.4 million	Taiwan	Southern Min/Hakka

It can be seen from Table 1 that many of the movements were chain movements. For example, the movement of over two million Altaic people into the central plains from the northern steppes in the second and third century caused at least three million Chinese to flee south. To give one example of how drastically these movements affected the populations, according to Lee (1978:29), in one county (Bingzhou in Shanxi), two-thirds of the population emigrated between 289 and 312. This not only affected the population of the north, but also of the south, as one out of every six people in the south was a displaced northerner after the movement. Nanjing became the capital of the Eastern Jin (AD 317-420) and Southern (AD 420-589) dynasties; it attracted over 200,000 migrants, a figure greater than the original local population. The form of speech in the area then changed from a Wu dialect to a Northern dialect. The speech of another Wu area, Hangzhou, became what Zhou & You (1986:19) call a ‘half-Guanhua (Mandarin)’ area because of the influence of the massive influx of northerners that came with the shift of the Song dynasty capital from the north to Hangzhou in 1127. While the phonology is basically that of a Wu dialect, it is lexically and grammatically more similar to the northern dialects, and does not have the usual literary/colloquial reading distinction of characters that the other Wu dialects have.

The movements have often been so massive that they caused major shifts in the overall demographics and language distribution of the entire country. For example, in the seventeenth century, northeast China, southwest China and the upper Yangtze comprised only about five percent of the population of China and ten percent of the Mandarin speaking population, but the movement of people to those areas from the middle Yangtze and north China was so massive that by 1982 these three areas included one third of China's population and about half of the Mandarin speaking population (Lee & Wong 1991:55). In some areas the movements have meant almost an entire displacement of the original population. For example, since 1949 there has been massive Government-orchestrated movement of Han Chinese people into the minority areas of Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Tibet, and other areas of western China. Some of this migration is encouraged as part of the effort to open up and develop the western part of the country.^v The effect is that the minorities have become minorities even in their own areas. For example, after many years of Han migration into Inner Mongolia, the Mongolians account for only 15.8% of the population (Zhang & Huang 1996:35). This has led to the loss of use of the Mongolian language in all but the most northern areas of Inner Mongolia. The same process is happening in Xinjiang, Qinghai, Tibet, and parts of Yunnan and Sichuan (see Ren & Yuan 2003 and other articles in Iredale, Bilik & Guo 2003; also Poa & LaPolla 2007).

Aside from migrations of Chinese into other parts of China (or what later became part of China), there was also quite a bit of influence from non-Chinese people moving into areas of China, particularly north China, where for more than half of the last thousand years the Chinese were under the control of Altaic invaders. Beijing, for example (see Lin 1991), was a secondary capital of the Liao dynasty (Khitans; 907-1125) and the early Jin dynasty (Jurchens; 1115-1234), and was capital of the Jin from 1153-1234. Beijing was again the capital of the Yuan (Mongols; 1234-1368), Ming (Han; 1368 to 1644), and Qing (Manchu; 1644 to 1911) dynasties. Except for three hundred years during the Ming dynasty, Beijing was a political center of non-Chinese people for 1000 years. The populations changed, though, as the Jin government almost emptied the city in 1123, moving the people to the Northeast. In 1368, the Ming government moved large numbers of people mainly from Shanxi and Shandong into Beijing to populate the city. In 1644, the Manchu rulers moved most of the original inhabitants out of the inner city and moved the Eight Banner army and their family members into the inner city. While many of the invaders assimilated to Chinese language and culture, they also had an effect on the language and culture of China, particularly in the north. Mantaro Hashimoto (e.g. 1976, 1980, 1986) has talked about this as 'the Altaicization of Northern Chinese', and has argued that a continuum of features from north to south, such as the northern dialects having fewer tones, less complex classifier systems, and an inclusive/exclusive distinction in the 1st person pronoun, while the southern dialects have more tones, more complex classifier systems, and other features similar to the Tai-Kadai and Hmong-Mien languages (see You 1982, 1995; Zhou & You 1986; Wang Jun 1991), is due to Altaic influence in the north, and Tai/Hmong-Mien influence in the south. He also suggests (1976, 1992:18) that the preservation of final *-n* and *-ŋ* in Mandarin while all the stop endings and *-m* were lost might be due to the fact that these two finals are found in Manchu. Li (1995) argues that the inventory of vowels and the syllable structure of Chinese changed after the Tang period due to the Altaicization of the language, that is, the adoption of the Chinese lexicon and grammar by Altaic speakers, but with Altaic phonology.

The resulting mixtures of the people from these migrations with the people originally in the areas they moved into are what give us the dialects we have today (cf. Zhou & You 1986, Wang Jun 1991). For example, the early Wu dialect had formed from a south-eastern migration into an Austroasiatic area,^{vi} and the Chu dialect (a precursor to the Xiang dialect) formed from a very early southern migration into a Tai/Hmong-Mien area,^{vii} and then the Gan dialect formed in the area where the Wu and Chu dialects had contact with each other in central and northern Jiangxi because of a later migration during the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). Later migrations brought successive waves of immigrants into the area from the north, and then there was a split of this dialect into the Gan and Hakka dialects by migration of what became the Hakka to the east and south, and then later to the west. Contact with languages in each area where the Hakka migrated to resulted in varieties of Hakka that reflect features of those languages (see Hashimoto 1992). In Fujian (Bielenstein 1959, Norman 1991) the language was that of the Min-Yue (a subgroup of the Bai Yue) before any Chinese came into the area, and then the first Chinese settlers in the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25-220) brought with them the older dialect of the Wu area, as colonization was from Zhejiang in the north. The original Wu dialect in Zhejiang changed quite a bit after that period due to the massive immigration from the north after the fall of the Western Jin Dynasty in the fourth century. Many of these latter Wu speakers again migrated south into Fujian, and so now the Fujian (Min) dialect shows evidence of influence from at least the following languages: the Min-Yue language, the Wu dialect of the Han period, a post-Han Wu stratum brought in by

later immigrants, a Tang dynasty (post-8th cen.) literary form of the Tang koine, and Modern Mandarin (Norman 1988, 1991). Lien (1987; discussed in W. S-Y. Wang 1991b, Ch. 4) has discussed the complicated interactions of these various strata, and has shown how these interactions lead to an ongoing gradual bi-directional diffusion of features (of tones and segments) among the different strata, which has been creating forms that are not identifiable as originating from one particular source language, such as the word for ‘thank’ in the Chaozhou dialect, which has a segmental form, [sia], which derives from the Tang dynasty literary layer, but a tone that the form would have in the colloquial layer. There are also cases of different combinations, such as colloquial initial with literary final and tone, and literary initial with colloquial final and tone (see also Lien 1993, 1997; Wang & Lien 1993). The initial discovery of this phenomenon led to the development of the theory of lexical diffusion (see, e.g. Chen & Wang 1975), of which Lien’s work is an extension. An important point to note is that while the initial strata were the result of language contact (massive borrowing of literary forms or substrate/superstrate influence), the gradual bi-directional diffusion of features has been occurring over a long period of time and is a language-internal phenomenon (though one which of course may be influenced by other factors, such as new superstrate influence).

While in Chaozhou there was a mixing of pre-existing phonemes to create new morphemic forms, there are also cases of the creation of new phones or phonemes because of contact influence, such as in the creation of voiced aspirates for morphemes in a particular tone category in the Yongxing form of the Xiang dialect spoken in Sichuan. Ho (1988; also discussed in W. S-Y. Wang 1991b) suggests that these voiced aspirates arose because of contact between this dialect and the surrounding Mandarin dialects. In these Mandarin dialects, words that formerly had voiced initials and were in the level tone category became voiceless aspirates, while in the Xiang dialect in general they continued to be voiced. In Yongxing, due to the competing influences of the Mandarin feature of aspiration and the Xiang feature of voicing, about 80% of the initials of morphemes in that tone class have become voiced aspirates, a new type of initial for that language.

Compare these phenomena with Dixon’s (1997) discussion of the gradual diffusion of linguistic features in a linguistic area. This same sort of bi-directional diffusion among different languages of a bilingual population (rather than strata within a single language) can lead to the areal similarities associated with a linguistic area. Chen 1996 is a careful study of the bi-directional diffusion of features between Chinese and Tai in Dehong Prefecture of Yunnan Province in China. Chen has shown that in some cases there has been simplification of the sound system of a native language due to the influence of the contact language, e.g. the loss of the distinctions between /l/ and /n/ and between /ts/ and /tʂ/ in the Chinese spoken by ethnic Chinese, as these distinctions do not exist in Tai, and the loss of certain vowel distinctions in the Tai of ethnic Tai (e.g. between /w/ and /ɤ /) because these sounds are not distinguished in Chinese. In other cases there has been an increase in phonemes due to the influence of loan words in the language, e.g. the development of /kh, tʂ, h/ in the Tai of Luxi county. Chen argues that much of the influence is through an interlanguage he calls “Tai-Chinese”, so in a sense there is a tri-directional diffusion in this context.

In Table 1 it is stated that many of the early movements were into areas inhabited by the Bai Yue (Hundred Yue). From the linguistic evidence, it seems there were at least two major subgroups of the Hundred Yue, one which spoke Austroasiatic-related languages (mostly along the coast possibly as far north as Shandong), and another that spoke Tai and Hmong-Mien-related languages (mostly the interior of the south up to the Yangtze and as far west as present-day Sichuan province) (Pulleyblank 1983; Li 1994; Bellwood 1992, Tong 1998). Norman & Mei (1976; see also Norman 1988) give words from Min (Fujian) dialects for ‘die’, ‘dog’, ‘child’, and others that seem to be cognate with words in Austroasiatic rather than Sino-Tibetan. Yue-Hashimoto (1967, 1991) and others (e.g. Baron 1973; You 1982, 1995; Zhou & You 1986; Huang 1990; Cao 1997; and Meng 1998) give evidence of contact influence between Cantonese and the Tai and Hmong-Mien languages, including not only lexical evidence, but structural evidence, such as word order, the specifics of the tone system, marked phonetic patterns, and special uses of the classifiers. In the prehistoric period, the Hundred Yue may have included speakers of the precursors of Austroasiatic, Tai, Hmong-Mien, and possibly Austronesian (see, e.g. Blust 1984/85, 1994).

There has also been influence from national and provincial prestige dialects on other dialects throughout Chinese history. Centers of population concentration developed, and languages in those centers came to be quite distinct from each other, with each having prestige within its own area, and then spread out from those centers. The result is languages forming something like prototype categories rather than areas with sharp boundaries (see, e.g. Iwata 1995). For example, comparing Guangzhou city Yue with Xiamen city Southern Min (each the prototype of its category), the differences are quite clear, and the languages are easily distinguishable, but in the areas of Guangdong

where the two languages meet, there are many forms of each dialect that to different degrees differ from the prototype of their category while having characteristics of the other category. In some cases it is difficult to distinguish whether a certain form of speech is a Yue dialect or a Southern Min dialect, as the two have leached into each other to form something that cannot be uncontroversially put into either category. These major centers have also influenced each other in various ways. See for example Yue-Hashimoto 1993 on the spread of certain patterns of interrogative syntax and other constructions among the Yue, Min and Beijing dialects, Chappell 2001 on the creation of ‘syntactic hybrids’ in the Southern dialects due to the influence of Mandarin, and Chang 1994 on the spread of features of the Wu dialect.

In Modern times there has been quite a bit of influence on the dialects from the Common Language (Mandarin).^{viii} There has been a strong effort to teach the Common Language, and this has been very successful in some areas, with the result often being influence on the local dialect. For example, children in Shanghai often speak Mandarin amongst themselves, as that is what they speak in school, even if they speak Shanghainese with their parents. This has caused some changes within Shanghainese, such as the leveling of vocabulary and phonology in terms of becoming more like Mandarin (see, for example, Qian 1991, 1997). In Taiwan, many young people of Taiwanese descent do not learn Taiwanese well (if at all), and even when they speak it, it is often a somewhat leveled form, where, for example, a Mandarin-based compound word will be pronounced in Taiwanese rather than using the traditional Taiwanese form (e.g. instead of [sin³³ ku⁵⁵] for ‘body’, you often hear [sin³³ tɛ⁵³], based on Mandarin shēntǐ). There is also loss of distinctions in some semantic areas, such as the differentiation of verbs used for the sounds animals make.

In areas where Mandarin is a well established second language, regional varieties of Mandarin are forming, such as the many varieties of Mandarin developing in the Northwest of China because of influence from various Altaic, Turkic or TB languages (e.g. Dwyer 1992, Chen 1982). Another interesting example is Taiwanese Mandarin, which can be said to have creolized to some extent out of an interlanguage. After 1949, there was a large influx of people from the mainland because of the communist take-over of the mainland. These people were mostly from Wu dialect areas, and spoke Mandarin only imperfectly as a second language. The Wu speakers attempted to teach the Taiwanese population Mandarin, and forced the Taiwanese to speak it even amongst themselves. The Taiwanese did not generally have access to native speakers, and so did the best they could with what they had, and often added pieces from their native language, Japanese, and English, forming an interlanguage heavily influenced by Taiwanese (see Kubler 1985, Hansell 1989 for examples). For the Taiwanese this remained a second language, but for the sons and daughters of the Mainlanders, who generally did not learn their parents’ dialects, and did not learn Taiwanese, this interlanguage became their first language. This group then became the first generation of native Taiwanese Mandarin speakers. There may eventually be a coalescence of the Taiwanized Mandarin and the Mandarinized Taiwanese. In Beijing there was a somewhat similar situation, in that there are three versions of Mandarin spoken: the Old Beijing dialect, the approximation to the Common Language of speakers of other dialects who have moved to Beijing, and the Common Language. Many of the people learn the Common Language as the national language, but only the sons and daughters of the non-Beijing natives learn it as a first language. So even though Taiwan and the Chinese mainland have only been separated for 50 years, the differences (in phonology, lexicon and grammar) between the two native versions of Mandarin are quite striking. Impressionistically, they seem more different than say British and American English, which have been separated for a much longer time.

3. Metatypy

I have argued elsewhere (LaPolla 2003b) that language is not something separate from culture or cognition. How we represent some state of affairs represents how we conceive of that state of affairs, and how we conceive of it is related to cultural norms and experiences. When people learn some aspect of another language, if the influence of the culture associated with that language is not great, the borrowers will assimilate the borrowed form to their way of thinking. If there is heavy enough cultural contact, the contact may slowly change the way the borrowers conceptualize certain events, such that they develop what Bhattacharya (1974) has called ‘new agreements in their outlook of life’, thereby creating ‘a common cultural core’; what Ross 2001 gives as the reason for metatypy, the convergence of structures between languages: speakers ‘increasingly come to construe the world around them in the same way’ as some other group. This common cultural core or construal of the world can then lead to the spread of certain constructions or linguistic patterns (see LaPolla 2005). For example, in the Wutun language (Chen 1982),

which is a heavily Tibetanized form of Chinese in Qinghai, rather than using two words for ‘widow’ and ‘widower’, as is standard in Chinese, the speakers of Wutun have come to agree with the Tibetans in not differentiating widows and widowers linguistically, and so use the Chinese form for ‘widow’ for both. The development of an inclusive/exclusive distinction in the first person plural pronoun in Northern Mandarin due to Altaic influence is another example, as making this distinction means having a clear cognitive category distinction that would lead to the use of different forms. This is true also of the example Ross 2001 gives of the development of the formal distinction between alienable and inalienable possession in Proto-Oceanic because of Papuan contact.

When people are used to using a particular linguistic category in a language they use regularly, they will try to use it in any language they speak. In other words, if some category or lexical item they are used to using is not in one of the languages they are using, there is a perceived gap. Many Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong, when they speak English, will frequently use then (generally said with a rising tone) at the beginning of discourse segments or speech turns. They do this because there is a particle in Cantonese, [kəm³⁵], used in this way, and they feel the need for something with that function when they speak English. English speakers will overuse the perfective aspect marker in Mandarin to satisfy their habit of marking past tense. Substratum influence, such as the development of the aspect and complementizer patterns that have developed in Taiwanese Mandarin on the model of the Taiwanese dialect (Chappell 2001) are of this nature. Heine (1994, see also 1997a,b; Heine & Kuteva 2001) has talked about the importance of event schemas for determining the type of grammaticalization you find in a language. These event schemas are ways of conceptualizing states of affairs. An example Heine discusses is comparatives. How speakers view a comparative situation, whether as a locational schema, and action schema, or whatever, will determine what sort of structure they use to express that situation. This way of thinking can change through contact with another culture, and lead to the development of what are commonly called calques, but better seen as examples of metatypy. Matisoff 1991 discusses several types of grammaticalization common to the languages of Southeast Asia that are based on particular types of schema, such as locative verbs becoming progressives, a verb meaning ‘get’ becoming an auxiliary meaning ‘have to/must, able to’ (see also Enfield 2001), and a verb meaning ‘give’ becoming a causative or benefactive auxiliary.

4. Conclusion

I have tried to show in this paper that the history of the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan speaking peoples is one of frequent migration and contact with other languages and cultures, and each other, and that this contact has been a major influence on the development of that branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. This is also true of the Tibeto-Burman side of the family (see LaPolla 2001). To understand why the languages of the family have the forms they do, and why there are difficulties in assigning a clear family tree structure to the family, language contact must not only be taken into account, but must be considered a fundamental factor in the formation of the family.

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ⁱ What can be reconstructed is an *s- causative and denominative prefix (Mei 1989), possibly alternation of voicing and or aspiration of initials for causatives, a *-t suffix for transitivization (Benedict 1972:98-102, Michailovsky 1985, van Driem 1988), and a nominalizing *-n suffix (see LaPolla 1994a, 2003a; Jin 1998, 2006). There is no evidence of relational morphology at the Proto-Sino-Tibetan or Proto-Tibeto-Burman levels (for discussion see LaPolla 1992a, 1992b, 1994b, 1995, 2004).

ⁱⁱ Benedict (1972:6) had Tibeto-Karen as one of two branches of Sino-Tibetan, with Tibeto-Burman and Karen being the two highest branches of Tibeto-Karen. Karen was given this position because it has verb-medial word order rather than the usual verb-final order of TB. However, most linguists working on Tibeto-Burman now consider Karen to be a branch within Tibeto-Burman, as they assume that Karen word order changed due to contact with Mon and Tai, and therefore is not an important factor to be used in genetic grouping.

ⁱⁱⁱ Several other proposals on the subgrouping of Sino-Tibetan and/or Tibeto-Burman are Bradley 1997; Burling 1983; Dai, Liu & Fu 1989; DeLancey 1987, 1991; Grierson 1909; Li 1939; Shafer 1955, 1966; and Sun 1988.

^{iv} A very interesting question is how we would classify the Vietnamese language today if Viet Nam had not achieved independence from China in the 10th century (after more than a 1000 years of Chinese rule), and so Sinitization would have continued unabated: would it be considered a separate language or a "dialect" of Chinese?

^v For example, to improve the education of Tibetan youth, thousands of secondary school teachers from the Han areas have been sent to teach in Tibet, and thousands of Tibetan students were sent to Han areas of the country to receive education (Iredale, Bilik & Guo 2003:74; Stites 1999:118).

^{vi} See Zhao & Lee 1989 for genetic evidence that 'the modern Chinese nation originated from two distinct populations, one originating in the Yellow River valley and the other originating in the Yangtze River valley during early neolithic times (3,000-7,000 years ago)' (p.101), and Mountain et al. 1992, Du et al. 1992 on the correspondences among surname distribution, genetic diversity and linguistic diversity in China.

^{vii} For linguistic evidence that Chu was a Tai/Hmong-Mien area, see Li 1994. See also Tian 1989 on the ethnic diversity of Chu and the affiliations of the different peoples.

^{viii} The Common Language (Putonghua) is a dialect created in the early 20th century by a group of linguists to be the national language of China. It takes the phonology of the Beijing dialect as the basis of its phonology, but the lexicon and grammar represent a more generalized levelling of northern dialects.