

The morpho-syntax of Archaic Chinese verbs: Loss of morphology as trigger for the emergence of analytic structures

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In my new project on the diachronic morpho-syntax of Chinese, I focus on the reconstructed morphology of Chinese verbs. The corpus to be established for this study will contain all verbs which have the falling tone (*qusheng*) in Middle Chinese and for which a suffix *-s has been reconstructed. The latter is the most frequently attested, and the most uncontroversial and best studied affix of Chinese. However, there is still some debate about the precise morpho-syntactic functions of this suffix. In my project, I am particularly interested in possible resultative readings of the *-s suffix.

My hypothesis is that the suffix *-s, and the verbal morphology in Chinese in general, was derivational and not grammatical. This means that it rather served to derive aktionsart types than to express grammatical aspect (contra Unger 1983, Jin Lixin 2006); the expression of aktionsart types (lexical aspect) is typical for derivational morphology (Kiefer 2010). I propose that the derivational morphology of Archaic Chinese was hosted in a split VP (following Ramchand 2008), and that its loss was one of the triggers for a change of Chinese from a more synthetic to an analytic language. In previous studies (2019, 2023), I tentatively proposed that the *-s suffix may have functioned as an overt *res* head in the sense of Ramchand (2008) with both unaccusative/intransitive and causative/transitive verbs, uniting the two major functions proposed for the suffix in the literature (e.g. Schuessler 2007). When at the end of the Archaic period the verbal morphology increasingly lost its transparency, new structures such as disyllabification of verbs and resultative constructions, including the source structures of the Modern Mandarin aspectual suffixes, emerged in order to replace the old morphology. In order to provide evidence for my hypothesis, all verbs in the corpus will be subjected to the tests established cross-linguistically for the determination of the event structure of verbs.

As basis for the classification of the verbs, the respective reconstructions proposed in the relevant literature (mostly Pulleyblank, Baxter&Sagart, Unger, Jin Lixin) and the glosses provided therein have been collected as a first step. The resulting list will be connected to and compared with the phonological entries in the *Jingdian shiwen* by Lu Deming (6th – 7th c. CE), a commentary on the Classical Chinese literature. Both lists will be published in an open access corpus. Example sentences from the *Jingdian shiwen* and from the Archaic Chinese literature will be added on which the cross-linguistically established syntactic tests will be conducted.