

The loss of morphology and the emergence of analytic structures in Chinese

The present discussion focusses on the analysis of the morpho-syntax of *vP* in Archaic Chinese and its diachronic development in Middle Chinese. We propose that the derivational morphology of Archaic Chinese was hosted in little *vP* (adopting the structure proposed in Ramchand (2008)), and that its loss was one of the triggers for a change of Chinese from a more synthetic to an analytic language. Huang (2010, 2015), Huang and Roberts (2017), and Feng (2015) proposed a distinction in terms of analyticity between Modern and Old Chinese showing that Modern Chinese has overt light verb constructions, indicating ‘high analyticity’ (H & R 2017). For Old Chinese, which lacks overt light verbs (Feng 2015), synthetic constructions with covert light verbs are proposed. One of their possible functions was to express causativity (example (1a)). In Middle Chinese these structures lose their productivity and are gradually replaced by structures with an overt causative verb (Wei 2000: 833) as in example (1b).

- (1) a. 遠 之 則 怨 a'. 明 德 遠 矣
yuàn zhī zé yuàn míng dé yuǎn yǐ
 cause.distant Obj then angry brightvirtue distant SFP
 ‘If one keeps them at a distance, ‘(his) brilliant virtue is far reaching.’
 then they become angry.’ (*Analects*, LAC) (*Zuozhuan*, LAC).
- b. 當 [使 遠 是 因緣],
dāng shǐ yuǎn shì yīnyuán
 should cause distant this cause
 ‘... you should remove these causes, ...’ (*Daoxing boreijing*, EMC)

In the present discussion, we propose that the loss of the derivational morphology of Archaic Chinese, represented by the examples in (1a), triggered the change to more analytic structures from AC to MC. (1a) and (1a’) with the state verb *yuǎn* ‘far, distant’ show contrasting tones; these developed from two different suffixes in Archaic Chinese: **-h* (**s-Gan-h* → *yuǎn* ‘far, distant’), and causative **-s* (**s-Gan-s* → *yuàn* ‘cause to be distant, remove’) (Jin 2006). The employment of state verbs (adjectives) as causatives could have, but did not require morphological marking in AC. These synthetic causative constructions basically ceased to exist in Modern Chinese.

Archaic Chinese had two different affixes that were realized as **s*: 1) a denominalizing (causative) prefix **s-*; and 2) a suffix **-s* (Haudricourt 1954). Two basic functions have been attributed to the suffix **-s*: a) a valency increasing (causative) and b) a valency decreasing function, connected to passive (Schuessler 2007), perfective (Jin 2006), and resultative (telicity) values (Meisterernst 2019). The loss of these morphemes played a decisive role in the emergence of new structures, leading to the diachronic development of new causatives and resultatives, and to the emergence of the Modern Chinese system of aspectual markers. In (2), the valency decreasing **s*-suffix marks the alternation

between the transitive reading (2a), and the marked unaccusative, resultative reading (2b) of the verb *chí/zhì* ‘regulate/ordered, regulated’. (2c) shows the newly emerging resultative construction in Middle Chinese with the resultative marker *yǐ* 已 grammaticalized from a verb ‘finish’, the source structure of the Modern Chinese perfective marker (Aldridge and Meisterernst 2018).

- (2) a. 政 以 治 民, b. 於是 宋 治。
*Zhèng yǐ chí(*r-de) mǐn* *yúshì Sòng zhì(*r-de-s)*
 Government YI regulate people, thereupon Song ordered
 ‘The government is necessary in order ‘... and thereupon Song was
 to regulate the people;’ (Zuǒzhuàn, LAC) well ordered.’ (Zuǒzhuàn, LAC)
- c. 如是 治 已, 而 梵 德 王, 睡眠 不 覺。
Rúshì zhì yǐ ér fàn dé wáng shuìmián bù jué
 Such ordered YI and brahma-virtue king sleep NEG wake.up
 ‘After everything was ordered like this, ...’

Following Ramchand’s first phase syntax, we propose that the causative and resultative affixes constitute *init* and *res* heads, respectively, as do the analytic causative and resultative markers; the analyses are in (3) and (4). The different syntactic positions of the causative and the resultative morphology in *vP* triggered the emergence of different analytic structures. The **-s* suffix in *yuàn* (**s-Gan-s*) (1a) is the overt realization of the *init* head of a verb with the structure [*init, proc*] in (3a). (3b) is the analysis of (1b). A causative verb replaces the lost affix and *V* is merged with the causative verb; other non-merged structures with an NP between *V_{cause}* and *V* are possible.

- (3) a. [*initP* pro[*init* s+yuan[*procP* zhi[*proc*<yuan> [XP]]]] ‘pro causes them to be distant’
 b. [*initP* pro[*init* shi+yuan[*procP* shi yinyuan [*proc*<yuan> [XP]]]] ‘pro removes these causes’
- The examples in (2) are analyzed in (4). *Chí* ‘regulate’ in (4a) is a [*init, proc, res*] verb, similar to English ‘break’ (Ramchand 2008:74f); (4b) as its unaccusative variant lacks the initiator phrase and includes only [*proc, res*]. In (4c) we propose that after the loss of the affix, the marker *YI* appears as head of the *resP*, which hosts a small clause expressing completion or realization (Aldridge and Meisterernst 2018); resultative verbs and the MC aspectual suffix *le* show similar paths of grammaticalization.
- (4) a. [*initP* pro[*init* chí[*procP* mǐn[*proc*<chí> [*resP*<mǐn> [*res*<chí>]]]]] ‘pro regulates the people’
 b. [*procP* Sòng[*proc* zhì [*resP*<Sòng> [*res*<zhì (= chí+s>]]]] ‘Song was well ordered’
 c. [*procP* pro[*proc* zhi [*resP*<pro> [*res* YI]]]] ‘pro was ordered’

References:

- Huang, James, Roberts, Ian. 2017. Principles and Parameters in Universal Grammar. In Roberts, Ian (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Universal Grammar*. Oxford: OUP.
- Ramchand, Gillian C. 2008. *Verb Meaning and the Lexicon*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Jin Lixin. 2006. *Shanggu Hanyu xingtai yuanjiu* [Morphology in Archaic Chinese]. Hefei.