
The book under review is a collection of studies on Sinitic languages, i.e. languages belonging to the Chinese family. As the title suggests, the studies are of both synchronic and diachronic nature, often in fact combining the two perspectives. The languages dealt with cover virtually all major 'dialect' groups of 'Chinese' as well as tapping into lesser known groups such as Jin and Hui. The volume consists of an introductory part of general nature and four specific parts, each of which presents the reader with three different case studies. It would be impossible to give an in-depth review of what are in fact thirteen essentially different studies of different, though related, languages. For this reason I will here try to give a homogeneous review of the volume as a contribution to the understanding of Sinitic languages, as well as of its relevance for general linguistic theory.

In the introductory Part I the editor gives a clear history of Chinese dialects that will be useful for readers not too familiar with Sinitic varieties. It is in Part II that we find the innovative contribution of this volume. Part II, 'Typological and Comparative Grammar', consists of two studies of typological nature, with emphasis on structural comparison across several varieties of Sinitic: these are Chappell's and Lamarre's contributions. Wu's
study, though included in this section, focuses heavily on New Xiang in diachronic perspective. In this first study, Wu presents a thorough analysis of locative markers in Changsha Xiang and suggests possible patterns of grammaticalization to account for their development. It would be interesting to know how these findings can be reconciled with other, generally observed grammaticalization patterns in non-Sinitic languages. In the second study, Chappell convincingly argues for a reinterpretation of the traditional 'experiential' markers of Chinese varieties as evidentials (p. 65), drawing on work by Jurafsky, Wierzbicka, Foley and Van Valin in particular. Chappell combines typological observations of Sinitic and non-Sinitic languages with general linguistic (in particular semantic) theory in a most satisfying fashion. Part II is concluded by Lamarre's typology of verb complements such as manner, potential and extent. Lamarre looks at the grammaticalization pattern of the realization marker 'to get' into manner/potential complement (cf. 117-119). Her approach too combines empirical observations (a wealth of data from various source languages) with theoretical relevance.

Part III focuses on historical Chinese grammar. With the exception of Sagart's contribution, this part does not shed a great deal of new light on issues of linguistic and typological diversity of the Sinitic family. This is regrettable as this is the most significant contribution of this volume. Only in Sagart's study of Archaic Chinese affixes do we find crosslectal comparison together with an attempt to follow the evolution of aspects of Sinitic morphology to the present. In Djamouri's study, which focuses on Shang bone inscriptions, we find an elegant analysis of five modal markers, while Peyraube carries on the analysis of modal auxiliaries but in Classical Chinese, concluding on a note that relates the evolution of verbs of volition in Chinese to grammaticalization patterns found in English (p. 186), an issue surely worth more exploration.