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## My Study of Sino-Tibetan Languages

Sun Hongkai

Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing,  
China

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This article reviews my research on Sino-Tibetan languages. In terms of research objects, I focused on Qiangic languages in the early days, and gradually expanded to Tibeto-Burmese languages, Sino-Tibetan languages, and East Asian languages. In terms of research methods, I mainly applied the theories and methods of historical comparative linguistics in the early days, gradually developed and first proposed the theories and methods of "historical typology", and also advocated the use of dense

I first proposed the academic viewpoint of establishing the Qiang language of the Tibeto-Burman language family, deeply explored the phonetics, vocabulary and grammar of Tibetan, Burmese, systematically carried out historical comparative research on the Sino-Tibetan language family, improved the classification of the grammatical system of China's ethnic minority languages, and explored the theory and method of Sino-Tibetan historical comparative method. Our work is based on Mr. Li Fanggui's four-part framework, and further enriched and developed Mr. Li's methods and viewpoints. We have conducted more research and practice to prove that the four-division method is consistent with the actual development of Sino-Tibetan languages.

Keywords: Qiangic, Tibeto-Burman, Sino-Tibetan, East Asian languages

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In the 1950s, when I was studying at Peking University, I was influenced by the ideas of Li Fanggui, Luo Changpei, Fu Maoji and others on the classification of Sino-Tibetan languages. This period was the embryonic stage of my Sino-Tibetan studies.

In 1937, Mr. Li Fanggui published "Languages and dialects" in the "Chinese Annals". The article divided the Sino-Tibetan language family into two language families: Sino-Taiwanese and Tibeto-Myanmar. Sino-Taiwanese can be further divided into three branches: Chinese, Taiwanese and Miao-Yao. This was the first time that Chinese scholars proposed the idea of classifying the Sino-Tibetan language family. In 1973, Mr. Li published a revised draft of the idea of classifying the Sino-Tibetan language family in the "Journal of Chinese Linguistics" "Languages and

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The family status of Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Tai and Miao-Yao is on a par with the Tibeto-Burman language family.

In this case, the Sino-Tibetan language family includes four language families, namely the Sino-Tibetan language family, the Dong-Tai language family, the Miao-Yao language family and the Tibeto-Burman language family. This classification idea laid the foundation for my basic understanding of the classification of the Sino-Tibetan language family and was the original intention and motivation for me to start exploring Sino-Tibetan research.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, my teacher Luo Changpei (1951) published "The Language and Writing Situation of Domestic Ethnic Minorities" in the "Science Bulletin". In 1954, Luo Changpei and Fu Maoji published "An Overview of the Language and Writing of Domestic Ethnic Minorities" in the "Chinese Language". This was the first article in the new China to systematically discuss the classification of Chinese language families. The article divided the Sino-Tibetan language family into four, namely the Dong-Tai language family, the Tibeto-Myanmar language family, the Miao-Yao language family, and the Han language family, listed more language facts, and classified the Li language branch into the Dong-Tai language family. This article has had a great impact and enriched my understanding of the classification of Sino-Tibetan languages.

In 1953, under the guidance of Professor Yuan Jiahua of Peking University, I investigated Shui and Dong languages. In 1954, I graduated from the Department of Chinese Language and Literature of Peking University and was assigned to work at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (later the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences was established). In 1955, I investigated Miao and Yao languages. These two investigation experiences were crucial to my personal growth. They allowed me to have a deeper understanding of the Zhuang-Dong and Miao-Yao languages before I paid attention to the Tibeto-Myanmar languages. After 1956, I began to focus on the study of the Miao-Yao lang

## 1. Research on Qiangic languages

In 1958, the second National Conference on Ethnic Languages was held in the Xinjiang Office in Beijing. The conference determined the principles of helping ethnic minorities create writing systems and formulated a leap forward plan for ethnic language work. At this conference, a brief table was issued: "Classification and Affiliation Table of Chinese Ethnic Minority Languages", which included the basic framework of the Sino-Tibetan language classification and listed the classification of more than 40 ethnic minority languages. However, the table also included a number of languages whose affiliations were undetermined, including Qiang. This conference made me further realize that the classification of Sino-Tibetan languages is an important and difficult issue in the Chinese linguistics community, especially the close relationship and main characteristics between them. At the same time, those languages whose affiliations have not yet been determined became the direction of my future

In 1960, the Institute of Ethnic Minority Languages gave me a task, which was to solve the problem of the affiliation of Qiang, Dugu and Nu. I organized a research team of five or six people to sort out the phonetics and vocabulary of Tibeto-Burmese. After systematic sorting and in-depth research, I first proposed that Qiang might be an independent language branch. At that time, other languages confirmed to belong to this language branch included Pumi and Jiarong. This view was published in Chinese Language (1962) under the title "Overview of Qiang Language". The situation of Dugu and Nu is more complicated. Dugu can be divided into one language branch with Jingkui.

During the Cultural Revolution, I began to pay attention to some literary quotations.

The situation of the Xifan translations in the Huayi translations, the classification of Xixia languages, whether they are related to Tibeto-Burman languages, and which Tibeto-Burman languages they are related to, etc., became the main issues I thought about at this stage.

During that time, I went to the Beijing Library every day to read documents and copy materials. In the process of copying, I found that most of the Xifan translations recorded Tibetan and its local dialects and vernaculars, but some translations were not recorded in Tibetan, nor in Qiang and Pumi languages that I was familiar with. This experience laid a solid literature foundation for my subsequent investigation and research (especially on Qiang sub-languages). After that, I published papers related to Xifan translations, correcting the previous misjudgments and misrepresentations of Xifan translations, such as "A Study of Xifan Translations" (1989a) and "A Further Study of Xifan Translations" (2002a). In 1981, at the first Xixia academic symposium held in Xia, I preliminarily argued that Xixia should belong to the Qiang language branch, questioning the traditional classification view of Xixia. Based on this conference, a series of related papers were published, such as "The Relationship between Xixia and the Qiangic Branch of the Tibeto-Burman Language Family from a Lexical Comparison" (1991), "Comparative Studies of Xixia" (1999a), "Several Issues in the Construction of the Crown-Vowel Consonant in Xixia" (1996a), "Also on the Problem of Minor Phonetics in Xixia" (Sun Hongkai and Liu Guangkun 2001), "On the Problem of Genetic Classification of Xixia" (2002b) and "On the Problem of Genetic Classification of Xixia" (2003b).

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The languages belonging to the Qiang branch have basically been recognized and acknowledged by the Western Xia academic community.

At the same time, I investigated a group of newly discovered Qiangic languages, which gradually gained attention and recognition from the academic community. From December 6 to 7, 1999, the Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, Taiwan held the "Qiangic Languages and Linguistics Symposium of the Tibeto-Burmese Language Family". At this conference, I published a long paper entitled "On Qiangic Languages in the Tibeto-Burmese Language Family". The paper systematically demonstrated the basis and innovation of Qiangic as an independent language branch of the Tibeto-Burmese language family, and sorted out its cultural and historical background. Since then, the investigation and research of Qiangic languages has gradually become a hot topic in the language academic circles at home and abroad. In 2007, the Commercial Press published "Languages of China", in which 12 Qiangic languages have been confirmed, namely Qiang, Pumi, Jiarong, Meiya, Ergong, Ersu, Namiyi, Shixing, Zhaba, Guiqiong, Lazhenrong and Queyu.

## 2. Tibeto-Burmese language studies

After the reform and opening up, academia embarked on a new path of development. The Tibetan Language Group and the Yi-Burmese Language Group of the Institute of Ethnology jointly invited Professor Wang Danian of Peking University to teach Burmese and learn Burmese, laying the foundation for the historical comparison of the Tibetan and Burmese languages. At the same time, experts and scholars from the two groups were organized to sort out the pronunciation and vocabulary of the Tibetan and Burmese languages, and

It was completed in early 1983 and planned to be published by the Minzu Publishing House, but due to various reasons, it was not officially published until 1991 by the Social Sciences Academic Press. The book's introduction systematically discusses the differentiation of simple consonants in Tibeto-Burmese languages, the historical evolution of complex consonants, the origins of complex vowels, long and short vowels, lax vowels, vorticed vowels, and rolled vowels, the historical evolution of consonant codas, the mechanism of tone generation and the conditions for differentiation, the origin and characteristics of weakened syllables, etc.

In the 1980s, the "Brief Annals of China's Ethnic Minority Languages" series was selected as one of the five issues of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. As a sub-editor of the language briefs, I had the opportunity to see the language system, grammatical features and vocabulary of each language brief, which was of great help to me in understanding the overall picture of China's ethnic minority languages. This series of books introduces 59 minority languages, including the ethnic groups that use the languages, their phonetic systems, vocabulary systems, and grammatical systems. For languages with different dialects and scripts, it also briefly describes the dialect characteristics and the history and structure of the scripts, and comes with a certain number of commonly used word lists. A total of 57 volumes of the journal were published, describing 59 languages, and all of them were published in 1987. In addition, Peking University invited a team led by Yu Xueliang from Minzu University of China (including Hu Tan, Chen Qiguang, Ni Dabai, Dai Qingxia, and Wu Bufan) to give a series of lectures. Later, the book "Introduction to Sino-Tibetan Languages" (Yu Xueliang 1991) was published based on the lectures. The book is an introduction to the basic situation and main features of Sino-Tibetan languages, and its

There is no big controversy in the international academic community about the relationship between Tibeto-Burmese and Chinese, but there is still controversy about whether Tibeto-Burmese and Miao-Yao have a genetic relationship. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some foreign experts and scholars were invited to Beijing to give lectures, which enlivened the academic atmosphere, broadened the academic horizons, and further promoted the in-depth study of the Sino-Tibetan language family. On September 2-3, 1978, the famous American linguist Mr. Li Fanggui, invited by the Institute of Ethnology and the Institute of Linguistics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, gave two academic reports at the Institute of Ethnology, the Institute of Linguistics, the Central Academy of Nationalities, and Peking University, respectively. The titles were "On Ancient Sounds" and "The Relationship between Vowels and Tones". On April 17, 1983, as part of the exchange of senior scholars between the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the US-China Academic Exchange Committee, James A. Matisoff, a professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, arrived in Beijing for a six-week academic visit. During this visit, he had academic exchanges with Chinese ethnic language researchers and gave academic reports on a series of topics, including the construction of the Tibeto-Burmese and Sino-Tibetan language families, comparative phonology and grammar of Tibeto-Burmese, tone genesis, historical semantics, Tibeto-Burmese lexicography, language affiliation and typology, and regional characteristics shared between Chinese and Southeast Asian languages. In his report, he proposed that there is no genetic relationship between the Kam-Tai and Miao-Yao languages and Sino-Tibetan languages, but there is a genetic relationship between them and Austronesian languages. This view has a great impact





(1998a), and "Number and Its Expression in Tibeto-Burmese Languages" (2010).

These studies not only further demonstrated the evolutionary relationship within the Tibeto-Burmese language family from the phonological and grammatical levels, but also laid a solid foundation for the subsequent comparative study of the history of the Sino-Tibetan language family.

### 3. Research on Sino-Tibetan languages

I have accumulated experience in the study of the Tibeto-Burmese language family and firmly believe that there is a genetic relationship between the Sino-Tibetan language family. The next step is to expand the scope of research and use the methods of historical comparative linguistics to demonstrate the close relationship between them. In 1986, I applied for the National Social Science Fund project "Comparative Study of China's Ethnic Minority Languages". Taking language families as units, I invited Liang Min and Zhang Junru to do a comparative study of Dong-Tai languages, Wang Fushi and Mao Zongwu to do a comparative study of Miao-Yao languages, Zhou Zhizhi and Yan Qihan to do a comparative study of South Asian languages, Chen Kang to do a comparative study of Austronesian languages, Liu Zhaoxiong to do a comparative study of Mongolian languages, Chen Zongzhen to do a comparative study of Turkic languages, Hu Zengyi to do a comparative study of Manchu-Tungusic languages, and I myself did a comparative study of Tibeto-Burmese languages. This project lasted for five years, and the final publications included "An Introduction to the Dong-Tai Languages" (Liang Min and Zhang Junru, 1996), "Reconstruction of Ancient Miao-Yao Phonology" (Wang Fushi and Mao Zongwu, 1995), and "Chinese Mon-Khmer Languages and Austroasiatic Languages" (Yan

No monographs were published. At about the same time, colleagues at Minzu University of China also edited and published comparative vocabularies of the Kam-Tai language family and the Miao-Yao language family, which basically completed the comparative vocabularies of the various language families in the Sino-Tibetan language family. These milestone achievements will make a significant contribution to the history of comparative research on the Sino-Tibetan language family.

In the field of comparative historical research on the Sino-Tibetan language family, I established academic relations with overseas Sino-Tibetan research circles, strengthened academic exchanges, and promoted comparative historical research on the Sino-Tibetan language family in China. During my visit to the University of California, Berkeley in 1986, Luo Rendi, Chen Ningping and I interviewed Mr. Li Fanggui. Mr. Li received us at his home. During the interview, I asked questions about major hot issues in Sino-Tibetan language research, Chen Ningping recorded the interview, and Mr. Li answered our questions one by one. From August to November 1988, at the invitation of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Academic Research, I went to Japan to collaborate with Professor Oshio Nishida of Kyoto University on the study of Western-French translation. During my visit to Japan, I gave many academic lectures at Kyoto University, the Institute of Asian and African Languages and Cultures of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Osaka University of International Studies, and Kogo University of Foreign Studies, and had academic exchanges with my peers. From early April to mid-May 1991, at the invitation of Professor Bitisov of the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley, Liu Guangkun and I went to the United States for academic exchanges and participated in part of the work on the Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary hosted by Bitisov. During the visit to the United States, I met with American experts in the fields of

Academic special reports were given on issues such as pronouns, language family classification and Qiang language branches.

In the mid-1990s, with the publication of results on the various language families of the Sino-Tibetan language family, I felt that comparative studies and affiliations at the language family level had become more reliable, especially after a more comprehensive understanding of the affiliations of the Kam-Tai and Miao-Yao languages. So I wanted to push comparative studies at the language family level to comparative studies at the language family level. In 1995, the Chinese Society of Ethnic Languages and the Department of Chinese Language of Nankai University jointly organized a special seminar on "Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Study of Sino-Tibetan Languages". The older generation of ethnic linguists, including Xueliang Yu, Gongwan Xing, Shichang Yu, and Jun Wang, attended the meeting. The conference also invited a group of experts and scholars in the study of Sino-Tibetan languages from the Institute of Ethnology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Institute of Linguistics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the China Tibetology Research Center, Peking University, Renmin University of China, Nankai University, Yunnan University for Nationalities, etc. This was a high-level academic symposium on a special topic, a conference that carried forward the past and opened up the future, and had a positive impact on the research of the Sino-Tibetan language family in my country.

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, Tsinghua University Press launched the Complete Works of Li Fanggui (11 volumes). Mr. Ding Bangxin was the editor-in-chief. As one of the editorial board members, I participated in the editing process of the complete works and was responsible for editing Wuming Dialect (Volume 4). This editing experience had a great impact on my Sino-Tibetan research and laid the foundation for my subsequent cooperation with Mr. Ding Bangxin.

In 1997, at the invitation of Mr. Wang Shiyuan, I went to Hong Kong to discuss the rescue and protection of endangered languages. At the same time, Mr. Ding Bangxin was serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and he invited me to discuss the historical comparison of the cooperative Sino-Tibetan language family. In 1998, Mr. Ding applied for a project in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in Hong Kong with the title "Research on Sino-Tibetan Cognates" (in our names), and I applied for a National Social Science Fund project in Beijing with the same title. In the same year, both projects were approved and started at the same time. Several important tasks were listed at that time: first, compiling a series of books; second, building a phonetic vocabulary database. This database not only includes Sino-Tibetan languages in my country, but also collects materials from Sino-Tibetan, Austronesian and South Asian languages outside China. During this period, I sorted out the materials and wrote a number of special research articles published in the journal "Ethnic Languages", which were about complex consonants, syllable structure and preludes (Sun Hongkai 1999b; 2000; 2001b).

In order to systematically study the relationship between the various language families, I hired Chen Baoya and his team to study the relationship between the Kam-Tai language and Chinese, hired Chen Qiguang to study the relationship between the Miao-Yao language and Chinese, hired Xing Gongwan and Xing Kai to do a comparative methodological study, and hired Mr. Wu Anqi to sort out the humanities, history, and archaeology of the Sino-Tibetan language family; I collaborated with

1999; 2000). Some are hundreds of thousands of words, some are tens of thousands of words, and they demonstrate the relationship between the various language groups in the Sino-Tibetan language family and the methodological issues from various aspects. Mr. Ding also wrote articles on the methodological aspects. The Sino-Tibetan language family hypothesis has always been a major academic issue of concern to domestic and international Sino-Tibetan language scholars. The genetic relationship within each language group is basically not controversial, but the genetic relationship between language groups is controversial. After about five years of hard work, the project in Hong Kong and the project in Beijing were completed in 2004, and both achieved certain results, which were finally published one after another. So far, four volumes have been published (Ding Bangxin, Sun Hongkai 2000; 2001; 2004; 2011). It is particularly noteworthy that this project has created a "Sino-Tibetan Cognate Word Research Database Retrieval System", which has attracted widespread attention from the language academic community at home and abroad. This system is led by Jiang Di, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. It is the largest and most comprehensive research-based phonetic vocabulary database system developed at home and abroad so far, involving the most language families, language groups, languages, and languages. It is also the software system with the most powerful search function. The comprehensive application of this system will strongly promote the development of Sino-Tibetan historical linguistics and descriptive linguistics, and will also change people's concepts on

#### **4. East Asian Language Studies**

The collaboration with Mr. Ding Bangxin had a great impact on me.

At the same time, I gradually realized that Sino-Tibetan languages may also have a distant genetic relationship with Austronesian and South Asian languages distributed in the East Asian language area. After the "Sino-Tibetan Cognates Research" project was completed in 2004, I found that more materials were needed to explore the genetic relationship in this region in depth, especially the languages of the southern foothills of the Himalayas, where we still have too little information. There is also very little information on Austronesian languages. Coincidentally, at this time, I visited the Asia Institute of the Netherlands and met the vice president of Leiden University. The two sides discussed cooperative research and received support from the Foreign Affairs Bureau of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This cooperation started in 2006, during which time we sent young scholars from the institute to Leiden University to sort out language materials from the southern foothills of the Himalayas. In three years, we sorted out materials for five or sixty Tibeto-Burmese languages in three batches. At the same time, Mr. Ding bought a batch of Austronesian materials from abroad, about seventy or eighty languages. In this way, our database has been greatly enriched and supplemented, from more than 130 languages in 2004 to more than 360 languages in 2009, and the name of the database has been changed from "Sino-Tibetan Cognate Word Research Database Retrieval System" to "East Asian Language Phonetic Vocabulary Data Retrieval System". This is an open database with the richest data, the most powerful search function, the most advanced design concept, and the ability to exchange and connect with overseas data in the international Sino-Tibetan academic community (Tian Qianzi, Sun Hongkai, and Jiang Di 2007; Jiang Di 2011; Sun Hongkai and Jiang Di 2012).

The publication of the book "Sino-Tibetan Languages" (Kai et al., 2017) has brought Sino-Tibetan studies to a new stage. Although the book is named "Sino-Tibetan Languages", it actually includes languages from six language groups: Sino, Tibeto-Burmese, Kam-Tai, Miao-Yao, Austronesian, and Austroasiatic. The book consists of two volumes, about 5.54 million words, and has received support and assistance from the National Publishing Fund, the Hong Kong Government Research Fund, the National Social Science Fund, the Ministry of Education (National Language and Writing Committee) National Language and Writing Standards Construction and Informatization Research Project, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Research Bureau, International Cooperation Bureau, Veteran Affairs Bureau, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden University in the Netherlands, etc. The word list and other contents of the book are basic data extracted from the "East Asian Language Phonetic Vocabulary Data Retrieval System". Its publication and the construction and use of its database will play an important role in promoting comparative research on the history of Sino-Tibetan languages at home and abroad.

## **5. Discussion on the Methodology of Comparative Linguistics of Sino-Tibetan History**

In the area of comparative linguistic methodology in Sino-Tibetan history, I have written a number of papers on the topic, especially from the perspective of typology, I wrote an article entitled "Some Issues in the Study of Historical Typology of the Sino-Tibetan Language Family" (2011c). This article proposed a new approach to prove the genetic relationship between the Sino-Tibetan language family - historical typology, and discussed the original survival and coexistence of the Sino-Tibetan languages b



In addition, I have written two important articles, which are helpful to the understanding of Sino-Tibetan languages. One of them is "Co-innovation of Sino-Tibetan Languages" (2014), which was presented at the "46th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics" held at Dartmouth College in the United States in 2013, published in "National Languages" in 2014, and reprinted in full by the Chinese University Book and Newspaper Information Center. This article lists six issues, including tone, voiceless aspirated stop, affricate, quantifier, kinship noun prefix, and overlap, as evidence of the common innovation of Sino-Tibetan languages, to show that the academic view that the Sino-Tibetan language family is divided into Chinese, Kam-Tai language family, Miao-Yao language family, and Tibeto-Myanmar language family is theoretically well-founded. Another article is "The Historical Survival of Sino-Tibetan Languages from the Cognate Relationship of Several Numerals" (2018). This article agrees with the academic view of the traditional four-division method, and uses this as a starting point to demonstrate the historical survival and common innovation of Sino-Tibetan languages. The article uses the nine basic numerals of the Sino-Tibetan language family as examples to demonstrate the cognate relationship among Chinese, Tibeto-Burmese, Kam-Tai, and Miao-Yao. This cognate relationship is based on a group of cognates, which have common primitive remains and common innovations, and have all developed from common primitive types to the present. In addition, these type features still remain in existing languages, such as complex consonants and final consonants in the syllable structure type. This is the basis and evidence for our demonstration of cognate relationships today. In addition, the historical comparative study of Sino-Tibetan languages is also related to the origin and migration of populations. The article "Languages and Their Cultural Values in East Asia" (2015a) published in

This paper intends to sort out the early human activities and cultural relics in East Asia based on prehistoric anthropology and archaeology data, and explore the relationship with the general pattern of languages in East Asia today and their possible origins. In addition, I also invited Professor Li Hui, a student of Jinli School of Fudan University, to give a speech on "Genetic and Archaeological Evidence for the Origin of Sino-Tibetan, Miao-Yao, and Dong-Tai Languages" (2016) at the 49th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics of Jinan University in Guangzhou.

These articles have made a great step forward in methodology, proposing that the basic methods of historical comparative linguistics should at least include the following two aspects: one is to find evidence of cognates, which is a historical legacy; the other is to find common innovations. In addition, it is necessary to closely follow and deeply understand the research progress of related disciplines (especially history, ethnology, molecular anthropology, etc.).

## **6. Conclusion**

I have been conducting field research in ethnic minority areas for a long time. I have investigated more than 30 Sino-Tibetan languages, 15 of which were discovered and systematically studied for the first time. The field research lasted for more than 150 months. In terms of research objects, I focused on Qiang languages in the early days, and gradually expanded to Tibeto-Burmese languages, Sino-Tibetan languages, and East Asian languages. In terms of research methods, I mainly applied the basics of historical comparative linguistics in the early days.

I first proposed the academic viewpoint of establishing the Qiang language of the Tibeto-Burman language family, explored the phonetics, vocabulary and grammar of Tibeto-Burman, systematically carried out comparative historical research on the Sino-Tibetan language family, improved the classification of the grammatical systems of China's ethnic minority languages, and explored the basic theories and methods of Sino-Tibetan historical comparative method. All of these works are based on Mr. Li Fanggui's four-part framework.

From August 17 to 19, 1982, the 15th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics was held in the Hall of Science in Beijing. During the conference, a symposium was organized around issues related to Sino-Tibetan languages. Mr. Paul K. Benedict, an international expert in Sino-Tibetan studies, attended the symposium and exchanged ideas with experts at home and abroad on the classification method of Sino-Tibetan languages. When we introduced the basic framework of the domestic four-division of Sino-Tibetan languages, Paul K. Benedict believed that this was Mr. Li Fanggui's method. After so many years of in-depth and systematic research, we believe that the classification method of Sino-Tibetan languages cannot escape the four-division framework of Mr. Li at that time. From the perspective of historical typology, it is mainly manifested in the following five aspects: first, Proto-Sino-Tibetan has complex consonants; second, Proto-Sino-Tibetan has a set of minor sounds; third, the post-consonants of Proto-Sino-Tibetan have become a medial system; fourth, Proto-Sino-Tibetan has systematic consonant codas; fifth, Proto-Sino-Tibetan is a monosyllabic language. Our work is to further enrich and develop Mr. Li's methods and views on the classification of Sino-Tibetan languages. We have proved through more research and practice that the four-division method is in line with the actual situation of the development of Sino-Tibetan languages.





















