The Analytic Causatives of Early Modern Southern Min in Diachronic Perspective*

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This study of Early Modern Southern Min examines issues in the grammaticalization of its analytic causative constructions and sets out to explain the apparent singleton status of su3 賜 ‘bestow’ as a causative verb in the history of Chinese.

The three main causative constructions in Southern Min, as attested in 16th and 17th centuries documents, are formed on the basis of lexical verbs belonging to the semantic field of either ‘give’ or ‘cause’. These have been grammaticalized into causative function as V₁ in complex clauses of the type:

NP_Causer + V₁[causative] + NP_causee + V₂ + (NP…)

The main source for the data is the Southern Min translation of the Doctrina Christiana en letra y lengua china (ca. 1607) which we compare with the contemporaneous Li Jing Ji 荔鏡記 [Romance of the Litchi Mirror] (1566, 1581), a Ming dynasty play written in a mixture of Quanzhou and Chaozhou dialects. A brief diachronic outline of causatives is also provided within a typological perspective, including an account of grammaticalization pathways involved.

Key words: analytic causatives, polygrammaticalization, Southern Min, Sinitic languages, diachronic syntax, verbs of giving

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